ACROSS / A15
31 dead / retired teachers receiving salaries in ARMM

WORLD / A25
Court rules to bury Nicole Smith's body beside son in Bahamas

WORLD / A26
Iraq's insurgents now mixing car bombs with chlorine

CORRECTION BOX / A4
In PDI's list of medical board exam passers, 23 names were inadvertently omitted

SPORTS / A20
Gin Kings close out Beermen for seventh PBA title

CGFNS to '06 nurses: Forget appeal, take test

By Nikko Dizon

THE COMMISSION ON GRADUATES OF FOREIGN Nursing Schools (CGFNS) is standing pat on its decision not to issue Visa Screen certificates to those who passed the failed June 2006 nursing licensure examination—unless they retake the questionable portions.

The latest CGFNS statement, posted yester

CGFNS A17

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Saturday, February 24, 2007 ** 4 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 78 P10 www.inquirer.net

Erap defends JV, denies Jinggoy is taking over

By Norman Bordadora and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

DEPOSED PRESIDENT Joseph Estrada yesterday came to the defense of his son, San Juan Mayor Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito, and said there were no plans

EDSA A2

'President may be liable'

Melo Report says killings state's responsibility under int'l law

By Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo may be held accountable under international law if the political killings remain unresolved and unabated under her watch, according to the Melo Commission.

In its 88-page report, the commission, led by former Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo warned that the government could not "sit idly by and refuse to act."

"Ultimately, the State has the responsibility of protecting its citizens and making sure that their fundamental liberties are respected," it said.

The commission drew attention to a growing worldwide consensus for state responsibility for non-state acts.

"[This] posits that if the State fails to investigate, prosecute or redress private, non-state acts in violations of fundamental liberties, it is in effect aiding the perpetrators of such violations, for which it could be held responsible under international law," it said.

But Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, who furnished the Malacañang Press Corps a copy of the report on Thursday, countered: "Accusations do not solve the problem; actions do."

Bunye said that "from the beginning, the government has strongly condemned the killings of activists and journalists," and stressed that Ms Arroyo formed the Melo Commission "in order to get to the bottom of the political killings that have plagued the nation for many generations."

He pointed out that the government had even invited members of the international community, such as the European Union and United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston, to help expand the reach of the investigations.

Bunye said Ms Arroyo had "taken decisive action both before the [Melo] report and also in answer to the report, to move the nation forward and stop these killings once and for all."

He added: "The President will continue to take the necessary actions to lay

PRESIDENT A13

AI warns RP: Act now before violence rules May elections

Yok Contreras

IN A POSTSCRIPT TO THE EXPLOSIVE reports of the Melo Commission and a United Nations rights expert on the political killings in the country Amnesty International has warned that all that effort would go to waste if violence would once more dominate the May polls.

"The election period will be fraught with its own tensions. It is essential that the munificence of all political parties commit to working strenuously to put an end to the ongoing killings and so minimize the risk of a further escalation of violence during the polls," the London-based rights watchdog said yesterday in a statement.

It said the Melo Report, together with the initial findings of Philip Alston, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, "should give the impetus to the government and all political parties and groups to act decisively to end the political killings in the run-up to legislative and local elections in May."

Said Natalie Hill, Amnesty International deputy Asia Pacific director: "The body of evidence is now so compelling that it can no longer be ignored. There is substantial confirmation of the pattern of political killings in the Philippines."

But for all that, Amnesty International

AI WARNS A19

THE TREE OF LIFE serves as a backdrop of President Arroyo as she keynotes the First Coconut Farmers National Convention at the University of Mindanao in Davao City. In her speech, she says that the distribution of the sequestered coconut levy funds to the farmers has taken so long. But the courts have yet to resolve the issue of the funds' ownership.

MALACAÑANG PHOTO

'Kiko' to go; Gringo, Goma, Paredes eyed to replace him

By Dona Pazzibugan and Norman Bordadora

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER FRANCIS Pangilinan rejected a Genuine Opposition invitation for him to attend its Manila proclamation rally today, and opposition sources said the independent senator might be dropped from GO's senatorial slate.

A leading opposition candidate, Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero, said he would not be surprised if GO's executive council left Pangilinan out of its ticket.

Reached by the Inquirer, detained former President Joseph Estrada only said: "I cannot comment on that. We will probably know after the proclamation rally tomorrow."

Pangilinan insisted he could not be compelled to show up at today's opposition rally at Plaza Miranda in Quiapo, or join other campaign stints as he was not a "guest candidate" of GO.

"I will not attend the (proclamation rally) because I am not an official member of GO. I'm only a guest candidate," he said in a statement in Pilipino.

"I like to reiterate I am an independent candidate," Pangilinan stressed.

But the past two weeks of the campaign, some opposition members have complained that it was unfair for GO to carry Pangilinan on its slate in the face of his refusal to be seen with the rest of the candidates.

Opposition leaders headed by Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, chief of the United Opposition (UNO) party, held an emergen-

KIKO A4

INSIDE PCGG 21 YEARS LATER

No more assets to protect in RPN 9, IBC 13

By Fernando del Mundo and Margaux C. Ortiz

(Third of a series)

NOWHERE IS THE RECORD OF THE Presidential Commission on Good Government more dismal than in its operations of the largest television networks during the martial law years—Radio Philippines Network (RPN 9) and International Broadcasting Corporation (IBC 13).

They are now destined to be consigned to the scrap heap of the industry

SPECIAL REPORT

wallet present circumstances.

Employers of these two stations say they are struggling to make both ends

HOWERE A6

Chavit an 'investor' in Metrowalk, PCGG admits

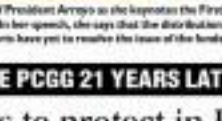
By Dexter L. Lucas

CHANCES ARE, ANY AVID BUYER OF original movies in DVD format has heard of or shopped in the popular Metrowalk Commercial Complex along Meralco Avenue in Pasig City.

Chances are, too, that any visitor to Metrowalk has heard whispers and rumors as to who really owns the busy shopping and dining center that sits on a prime piece of real estate that is being managed by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG).

"Chavit" is the name most often associated with the valuable—and sometimes controversial—property.

Indeed, the involvement of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson in Metrowalk Commercial Complex has always been a matter of conjecture. Recently, however, the PCGG confirmed the rumors that the



most while PCGG-appointed managers enjoy perks beyond that allowed by its own code of ethics—as more than P12,000 a month.

Edwin Fergus, a former RPN 9 vice president, says PCGG appointed officials were getting in the 1990s as much as P50,000 a month—"quite a lot at that time." But in fact the more contentious issue is the networks' steady march down the drain since the PCGG takeover.

The bigness tried but failed to inter-

CHAVIT A6

influential politicians has never admitted to that Singson is directly involved in the property.

"He is an investor in Pasig Printing," PCGG Commissioner Ricardo M. Abcede said in an interview with the Inquirer, when asked about Singson's interest in Metrowalk.

Abcede was referring to Pasig Printing Corp. which stands as the lessee of a

Neda chief: Some gov't regulatory firms 'captured' by big business

DAVAO CITY—IN A RARE DISPLAY OF candor, the government's main economic policy-maker yesterday said state regulatory agencies have been "captured" by big business and working largely to benefit the latter instead of protecting the interest of the people.

"That's the problem. The interests of business have been very influential with the regulators," said Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri.

This is why people pay higher prices for goods and services offered by businesses that are supposed to be regulated by these state agencies, he said.

"The people are losing because they have to pay higher prices," said Neri who heads the National Economic and Development Authority.

Neri cited as one example two crucial service sectors, the ports and airlines, which government has been trying to de-monopolize for years to introduce more competition and bring down transport costs.

The poor state and management of the country's port facilities has been largely blamed for the inefficient movement of

NEDA CHIEF A6

PCSO
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FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Bets fear loss of GO official status

By Jerome Aning and Gil Cabuenagan Jr.

OPPOSITION SENATORS YESTERDAY WARNED the Commission on Elections against declaring President Macapagal-Arroyo's political party, Kampi, as the "dominant minority party" that would shut out the opposition from representation in key election activities.

"If that happens, it will become a mockery of our electoral system. It's just like a cooperative enjoying the benefits of two company salaries—Labor (the ruling party) and Kampi," said Sen. Pan Pilo Lacson in a text message to the Inquirer. The United Opposition (UNO) or the new Genuine Opposition (GO) coalition has the right to be declared the dominant minority party, he added.

Under election laws, only two political parties—the dominant majority and minority parties—will be given official-ballot entries. The latter is to be considered in determining the two parties to include the names of their participation in the previous election, the number of incumbent officials belonging to them and their ability to fill up candidates's slates down to the municipal level.

Senate President Manuel Villar, in an interview with the Inquirer, said that if Kampi is picked as the dominant minority party the opposition would be forced to cough up more funds to hire more poll watchers to prevent any attempt at cheating.

Comelec hearing

The Comelec has yet to decide which political party will meet the requirements for "dominant minority" as well as which ones will be accredited to offer rival poll watchers during the May elections.

Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. called all 20 political parties in the country to a hearing on Mar. 15 to give them a chance to air their views on the matter.

The Republic Act (RA) 9369 (see Law of 1991 [RA 7716]), entitles only six accredited major political parties to one principal watcher each.

The Commission asked the parties to prepare position papers explaining their performance in the previous elections, their organization structure and strength, and the number of incumbent officials and candidates belonging to them.

The position papers must be submitted within five days after the hearing, with a filing fee of ₱5,000 per party.

Every candidate is entitled to a watcher but not all will be given official access. Only the principal watchers of the six accredited parties will have access to all polling centers as well as canvassing centers in the national and local levels.

Based on the Comelec list of **senatorial bets, Lakas-CMD and Bibi have seven candidates each. KBL has five, the party-list group Bagumbayan has four, while NP and UNO have seven each.**

MILITANTS take shouted lines in front of the Edsa Shrine in a lightning rally that caught policemen by surprise. (Jun Aguirre)

Militants mark Edsa I with rallies

By Jerome Aning

MILITANTS GROUPS YESTERDAY staged separate rallies to mark the 21st anniversary of the first Edsa People Power Revolution.

After failing to hold a rally at the Edsa Shrine in Mandaluyong City, the militant labor group Partido ng Manggagawa gathered instead at the Welcome Rotonda in Quezon City to "bury" the ideals of the bloodless uprising.

Members of the group made a mock burial ground with the epitaph: More than Edsa 1 and the people's hope for change: 1986–2007.

They also carried placards with the messages "Edsa 1 : 21 taon ng pagmumulat ng mga aliping sa pagsasamantala; Edsa 1: 21 years of lessons in the rule of the people's bayan!" "Edsa 1 + Edsa 2 = political killings + Hello Garci," "Walang real democracy kung may political killings, Walang good governance kung may Hello Garci (No real democracy if there's political killings. No good governance if there's Hello Garci)."

But another leftist group managed to stage a brief rally at the Edsa Shrine.

After converging at the Rockwell Street cor. Edsa, the rallyists which police estimated to be between 150 to 200 led by Bayan Muna proceeded toward Ortigas Avenue.

Policemen guarding the Shrine on a 24-hour basis since Feb. 22 were caught by surprise when the rallyists proceeded to the Shrine instead of making a left turn on Ortigas "to avoid any provocation" at the People Power Monument.

Police just watched as the rallyists held a program. Traffic was also normal.

Mandaluyong Chief Supt. Roland "Bonbon" Asuncion said they had deployed 300 policemen around the Shrine.

But Velasquez noted that the number of rallyists is getting fewer. "They cannot even fill up the rectangular space in front." With a report from Santiago R. Alconaba

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Leftist groups assail Esperon on Joma clip

By TJ Burgonio and Christian V. Esguerra

ACTIVIST GROUPS YESTERDAY ACCUSED Armed Forces chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon of trying to justify the "extrajudicial killings" by lumping together unarmed leftwing activists and armed communist rebels.

The groups were reacting to Esperon's release on Thursday of a video of communist party leader Jose Ma. Sison saying that some party-list groups had links to the communist National Democratic Front (NDF). Esperon claimed this was proof they were legal fronts of the armed, underground movement.

"It is wrong for Esperon to arbitrarily without saying that they're the ones behind (the killings), and the justification is that (the victims) are members of the national democratic movement," lawyer Neri Colmenares of the left-leaning Bayan Muna in a press conference yesterday.

Humanitarian law

Colmenares, Bayan Muna nominee in the May party-list elections, said the government's decision to release the old video was unnecessary as an "affront to decency" of the memory of over 700 political activists over the past few years.

He stressed that the military was bound by international humanitarian laws that bar the killing of innocent civilians...including unarmed political activists.

In the video, Sison said Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Gabriela, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, Bayan Muna Utak, League of Filipino Students, Alliance of Concerned Teachers and other groups were connected with the NDF.

"Now, under pressure due to the international and local campaign against political killings, Esperon is fine-tuning his line to argue that by alleged association with the 'underground revolutionary movement, the left-party list groups are also enemies of the state and therefore fair game," Institute national chair Wilfredo Fortaleza said in a statement.

"We defend the right of left party-groups to exist even if they are ideologically sympathetic and affiliated with any 'underground' revolutionary organization. This is an internationally recognized right," adding that even communists have rights.

"Sir, they disable? Don't they know how to make a distinction between underground groups and legal democratic mass movements?" responded Rep. Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna in a press conference yesterday.

Ocampo pointed out that nowhere in the video did CPP founder Jose Ma. Sison identify Bayan Muna as a front organization for the underground movement.

Ocampo said Sison, who is in self-exile in The Netherlands, could not have mentioned Bayan Muna in the 1997 video. Bayan is the party-list group it won't born until 1998.

Ocampo said it was also clear in Sison's speech that groups considered as "legal democratic mass movements" such as Bayan Muna were not engaged in armed struggle.

Ocampo said the Sison video was one part of an orchestrated effort by the military to derail Bayan Muna's chances in the coming election.

Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño cited the filing of a disqualification case filed against the group supposedly by a member of rival Akbayan. Akbayan categorically denied that it was behind the effort.

Meralco told to pay damages to customer

THE SUPREME COURT HAS ORDERED THE Manila Electric Company to pay a customer P200,000 in damages after the court found that the company erred in billing her due to a defective meter.

The high court found it was Meralco's duty to maintain its electric meter, and affirmed the Court of Appeals's ruling stopping the power distributor from collecting the P233,000 it had billed Ms. Victoria Jose from 1993 to 1995, and to desist from cutting off her electricity service.

The high court also affirmed the appellate court's award of moral and exemplary damages to Jose, but reduced the amount to P150,000 from P1 million, saying the latter was excessive.

In awarding P150,000 in moral damages, the court said it was supposed to assuage the moral suffering of, and not to enrich, the complainant. The P50,000 moral damages, on the other hand, was meant to ensure that Meralco would treat its customers better, it added.

Leila B. Salaverria

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SMART TAYO

WTO chief in town, says Doha round now 'doable'

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINES HAS MUCH TO gain in the success of global trade talks under the World Trade Organization, both in obtaining better access to foreign markets and in shoring up its own industries to foreign competition, said WTO chief Pascal Lamy.

Lamy, who is on a visit to the country, said tariff cuts under the current Doha Round of trade talks would reduce tariff barriers that Philippine exports face in the United States, the European Union, Japan, China and Hong Kong.

At the same time, the Philippines was entitled to special and differential (S&D) treatment because it was a developing country, he said.

"This does not mean full exemption from [giving] concessions, but does provide policy space for the government to cover the most sensitive sectors and achieve development objectives," Lamy said in a speech before the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Philippine Exporters Confederation at the Renaissance Hotel in Ortigas.

About half a dozen protesters who were allowed into the forum chanted "Pascal Lamy get out," before being escorted from the room.

In an interview, the WTO official said a resumption of the Doha Round of trade talks has gained so much support from governments and traders that a successful conclusion of the negotiations was now "doable".

"The basic template to reach an agreement is ready and negotiators only have to agree on the precise 'numbers' in the accord," he said.

Success of the Doha talks means "a quantum of benefits annually and not quarters or semesters," Lamy said.

The Doha talks, launched in 2001 in the Qatar capital, aim to remove barriers to global trade but are currently deadlocked, notably over steps to reduce agricultural tariffs and subsidies.

The talks were suspended last July, but trade ministers at the World Economic Forum in Davos last month agreed that negotiations should resume.

Lamy said that if the breakthrough could be achieved, a resolution to the Doha trade talks could be reached in about eight months. But if the breakthrough does not take place, "we are back in where we were when the negotiations broke down," Lamy said, he said.

This could lead to "an erosion of the multilateral trading system," he warned.

A major issue in the negotiations is the developing countries' demand for developed countries to cut or even scrap subsidies to their domestic agricultural sectors.

Another sticky point is the rich countries' demand for greater access in the markets of poorer countries by means of tariffs.

"My estimate is that it would take eight months to conclude the round from the time when a breakthrough is achieved," Lamy said.

He said the "major players," namely the United States, the European Union, India, Brazil and Japan, were "consulting quietly with each other," to ensure such a breakthrough could be achieved.

He declined a WTO breakthrough by considering a "political agreement on agricultural subsidies ... agricultural tariffs and industrial tariff reductions."

This means that the developed countries and the developing countries will have agreed on how much to reduce agricultural subsidies as well as tariffs on agricultural and industrial goods.

He said the current round of WTO talks was hard to conclude because a deal to scrap any remaining barriers to trade in services by the end of 2007

Globe may win unlimited text case by default

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Commission (NTC) may soon drop TXTPower's complaint against Globe's new unlimited texting promo since the consumer group is not inclined to pursue formal hearings.

NTC Atty. Joselito Cordero Valle collapsed Friday afternoon when TXTPower refused to accept Globe's final offer of P99 for six days unlimited texting as an additional choice in its current promo.

"The offer translates to about P15 a day, which is only slightly lower than their initial offer of P18.00 for six days, or P16.67 a day. P15 a day is still much higher than our demand of P10 a day, which Globe can offer at P5.00 for five days," TXTPower spokesperson Anthony Ian Cruz said.

NTC Deputy Commissioner Jorge Sarmiento said it received a motion to dismiss from Globe after the talks collapsed and will give TXTPower 10 days to reply.

Collapsed talks

"If TXTPower does not reply, only Globe will we resolve the motion," Sarmiento said.

However, Cruz said TXTPower was not inclined to attend any more meetings or hearings on the case. He said his group asked the NTC to decide on the case Friday but the regulator instead informed them of the motion from Globe. He accused the NTC of dismissing TXTPower's case based on Globe's motion to dismiss the complaint.

"The talks having collapsed, we will not explain our complaints anymore; our complaints already are in it," Cruz said.

NTC was supposed to decide on the issue on Feb. 12 after Globe refused to follow its cease and desist order on a new unlimited texting promo that was the subject of a complaint by TXTPower.

TXTPower called it a veiled price increase and contrary to the telco's claim of "permanent rates" in a previous unlimited texting promo.

Globe filed an appeal for reconsideration and the NTC sought to broker a compromise agreement instead of meeting hearings right away.

The two sides have since aired their respective offers and counteroffers in their other consultation meetings.

KAPATIRAN PROCLAMATION RALLY

No stars, no fiery speeches, no big crowds

By Christian V. Esguerra

TIRED OF FIERY POLITICAL SPEECHES on the dizzying presence of movie stars?

A relatively sleepier political party advocating feel-removed politics offers a respite to all that at its proclamation rally in Club Filipino in Greenhills, San Juan, at 9 a.m. today.

Ang Kapatiran will officially present its less sensational lineup on the same day that the Genuine Opposition parades its complete bunch: duly composed of veteran politicians and young rebels at its proclamation rally at the Plaza Miranda in Manila.

With only three candidates and very little experience in the Philippine elections, Kapatiran doesn't intend to outshine the administration's Team Unity or GO when it comes to political showmanship and antics, according to Kapatiran founder Nonie Pedroso.

"We're helping build a nation of character here," he told the Inquirer yesterday. "To achieve that, we have to promote a politics of virtue, duty and good citizenship."

Pacheco, a leading advocate of capitalism society, admitted that the idea might not sell well to an electorate still primarily blinded by popularity and money in choosing their candidates.

Only 300

Thus, organizers are expecting only around 300 participants to attend today's proclamation of the party's unsensational bets which include Dr. Manila Bautista and lawyer Jesus Jerome Paredes and Sabina Daza.

Bautista, 44, is a gastroenterologist who had spent the last 17 years working in the United States. Last year, he went home for good with his wife and four daughters and was later convinced to run under the Kapatiran ticket.

Paredes, 58, a formerly executive director of the Presidential Commission on the Visiting Forces Agreement with the US. He lost his job last year after questioning the barrier installed on the US Embassy at Merdeka within Daniel Smith, a convicted rapist.

Sison, 50, is a seasoned lawyer specializing in taxation and family law.

The fourth candidate would have been Sharie Ongjoko, considered as one of the top lawyers in the country. But acting on his doctor's advice, the 75-year-old Ongjoko withdrew his candidacy and would instead focus on his job as Kapatiran president.

Pedroso said attendance in today's proclamation or Club Filipino would be indicative of the public's reception of the kind of politics and governance the three candidates and the party were trying to pursue.

"People basically have to choose between maintaining the status quo or changing it," he said.

He described the Kapatiran candidates as members of the "silent majority who believe in non-violence."

"They were all at the first Edsa revolution and they are bravely disappointed with what has happened afterward," he said.

As of yesterday, Pedroso said the party had received confirmation on the participation of businessmen, academicians, students and businesswomen in the San Juan event.

"People are really hanging for change in the political landscape," he said.

To help bankroll the Kapatiran campaign, organizers will launch the "Abo ng Pandiat sa Pagbibiro ng Pulitika," a donation program. The idea is to make the people use the campaign themselves.

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Q & A ON PCGG

Salonga: They took advantage of their position

Excerpts of an interview conducted by Inquirer reporter Norman Bordadora with former Senate President Jovito Salonga who served for about eight months as chair of the Presidential Commission on Good Government following its creation on Feb. 28, 1986.

Question: Has the PCGG exceeded its mandate?

Answer: During my time as commissioner I was appointed to a sequestered firm to take advantage of the position. Neither during the time of Ramon Diaz. But I observed that in subsequent administrations ... especially the last with the likes of Camilo Sabio and Ricky Abcede, these people took advantage of their position and became directors of sequestered firms, even chairmen, in violation of the law that I authored, the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Government Officials and Employees. This is punishable by imprisonment because of the conflict of interest.

During my time, we allowed reputable persons to sit in the sequestered firms but always making an account on how much they can get.

Q: Do you believe PCGG nominees should still be in the boards of sequestered firms?

A: Yes, but they should be reputable persons of moral integrity and competence. But not the PCGG commissioners because of conflict of interest. You are supposed to supervise the sequestered firms when you become a director especially in the board of major firms like Ma. Miguel. Take over the management and policy then you become vulnerable. You get more than what you get as commissioners. Many probably mean they are being bribed. Legally becomes questionable. This is the reason behind the Code of Conduct. They should be prosecuted, those who are doing this now. And in the words of a retired Supreme Court Justice, they should go to jail.

Q: When, Salonga was reading from his book "Presidential Plunder," and was pointing out a second function of commission, ...

There was another task which unfortunately occupied the time and attention of the PCGG—the administration and management, in whole or in part, of companies affected by its sequestration orders. PCGG's primary function of recovering the loot through litigation was being overshadowed and subverted by this secondary function which in many cases, involved the administration and integrity of the whole commission.

It was my belief even during my time when this secondary function was becoming a problem that another agency with the proper managerial expertise and competence should have been created by the Office of the President for this purpose, but nothing of that sort was done. Hence agents and persons appointed as directors for sequestered firms, many of whom are PCGG commissioners after my resignation as chairman found this secondary function more to their liking. And whatever was president was apparently tempted to take advantage of this to defeat the their own purposes.

Many of Ferdinand Jurado's appointees as directors of corporations affected by sequestration orders are better known for their kinship or for other activities (not obviously tainted by what the constitution and the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officers and Employees (RA 6713) describe as the "conflict of interest."

Q: You said in your book that another body should have been created to handle the management of the sequestered firms. Do you think this will address today's problem of the PCGG walking the firms dry?

A: Probably. But the problem is this: What if the people there are corrupt? And the Department of Justice for instance. You won't have a problem if you have a secretary of justice like Pedro Tuason. But what about now? You have Raul Gonzalez who is Cheloy's brother-in-law, and he's also overstaying. The confusion cold. There should be leadership by example. You don't solve the problem by creating another agency.

Q: The PCGG has lost some important cases as well. What can be done to improve the agency?

A: No matter how good your PCGG commissioners are, the cases are still decided by the courts. Most were decided by judges appointed by Marcos. You have a problem of trying to look and ask Marcos [dirt of gratitude and camaraderie] 13 [laundry, every agency of government must be led by persons of integrity and competence.

THAT TOWERING FEELING: The People Power monument along Edsa gets a touch of patchwork with a worker putting flags in the hands of the various statues sculpted by Ed Castrillo. Tomorrow marks the 15th anniversary of the peaceful revolt by the people on Edsa.

No more assets to protect in RPN 9, IBC 13

Turn to page A-2

view the PCGG's supervising agent, Conrado "Dodie" Limcaoco, who is in charge of Broadcast City housing the two networks, be this article. His staff says he had first agreed to turn an Inquirer reporter, but later made himself scarce.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. says the PCGG's presence in the media networks, at the very least, must now end because it has neither been able to protect their assets nor identify their owners as it is mandated to do.

"It seems inexcusable for PCGG to sit in the board of these sequestered firms at this time," says Pimentel.

Control of 48 companies

In his first official act following the overthrow of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos during the 1EDSA People Power revolution Feb. 22-25, 1986, President Corazon Aquino issued Executive Order No. 1. It created the PCGG and directed it to "functionally take over in the public interest or to prevent their "disposal or dissipation" assets believed to have been illegally acquired by Marcos and his associates until they could be disposed of in an appropriate manner.

RPN 9 and IBC 13 were among 48 major companies placed under PCGG control. More than 200 firms were sequestered with PCGG having little to do with their operation.

Pimentel said the monstrous activities of its agents were put on the spotlight late year when Sen. Richard Gordon's committee on government corporations called a hearing on questionable loans of the country's largest telecommunications companies.

The inquiry uncovered fabulous sums amounting to several millions in salaries, allowances and other perks of PCGG-appointed officials of Philcomsat documented in financial reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

It also provided the committee materials in each legislature that could possibly lead to the PCGG's abolition and the creation of sequestered firms to the Asset Privatization Trust, says Gordon.

Under the PCGG, the seized TV networks controlled:

Advertisers went away

Advertisers—the lifeblood of the networks—stayed away after the fall of the Marcos regime and the PCGG-appointed managers failed to woo them back for a host of reasons, including the lack of courageous to attract audiences and the unfavorable comparison to the marketplace with decent programs.

"There was a time when management changed hands three times in two years," says one RPN source. "To inquire on operations, company directives and employee morale was anathema," he says.

"PCGG has failed in many respects to protect RPN assets for various reasons: the regular change in management, incompetent CEOs and presidents, all of them Malacañang appointees," he says.

In 2000, says this source, under the watch of Crege Bermudez as chair, RPN 9 received infusion from Malacañang to the tune of P75 million to address serious financial problems. The money instead was used to pay off obligations for sick leaves, medical reimbursements, bonuses.

Solar Sports, which brings to Filipino homes NBA games and has prime time use of the channel, had offered a cash infusion to amount the to RPN in exchange for control of the entire operation in a bid to stop the financial bleeding and get the network back on track.

Fingin, former vice president for news, public affairs and sports and was head of the supervisors' union, opposed the deal. He says it would have diluted benefits of employees, people who have devoted decades of service to the company.

Dionisio Lara, president of the IBC Employees Union, says PCGG people running the network were posted there as payback for favors—going on both—by Malacañang. They were clueless on broadcast operations, he says.

"We only had ourselves when we talk to each other," says Lara. "We hope these people would help us push for privatization since we could not do anything about their continued presence in the board."

In a recent open letter to Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, employees called for the privatization of RPN 9 and IBC 13.

"Concerned government agencies like the PCGG and the Privatization Management Office [PMO] have failed in many respects to protect RPN assets for various reasons: the regular change in management, incompetent CEOs and presidents, all of them Malacañang appointees," the letter says.

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Who's accountable

They say it was the only way to a "second financial package for our organization and retirement benefits."

The sequestered networks should have closed a long time ago, insiders say. They now have obsolete equipment with an practical resale value. The only asset the networks have, these people say is their franchise to operate. Anyone can get this if connections is right.

There is, indeed, no one source for PCGG to protect because PCGG has dumped them in one reservation of re-election.

The question is: Who should be held accountable for the dissipation? With reports from Lawrence de Guzman, Inquirer Research

Chavit an 'investor' in Metrowalk, PCGG admits

Turn to page A-2

1,500-square-meter portion of what was popularly known as the "Dynasty sa Ilaya" property.

In a PCGG communication, Abcede is directly responsible for overseeing and managing the assets seized by the agency from the Marcos family and their associates since the 1986 Edsa Revolution.

He said that he has even dealt with Singson—an influential ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo—to discuss the future of Metrowalk and its lease contract with the PCGG.

"We've (set to close the lease bypassing the lease)," Abcede said.

Name does not appear

Strangely, however, Singson's name does not appear on the latest information sheet filed by Pasig Printing with the property regulator's.

The document lists only Cleofe Pardo G. Ignacio, Ms. Estrella M. Antillon, Rodrigo E. Reyes, Ram M. Pobre, Candido B. Pio, Dionisio M. Pangilinan, Hernando F. Salmorin, and Raymund F. Palad as directors and stockholders.

The firm has a paid-up capital of only P750,000.

In its lease contract with the PCGG signed in May 2000, Pasig Printing was represented by Raul Enrique B. Concepcion who is a vice president of Chavit Inc.

The Singson scion, for failed, to reach Ongpin for comment on the latter's Phone calls and text messages sent to his mobile phone went unanswered.

The bigger picture

Metrowalk is only a small portion of the 18.4-hectare Pasig property. The rest, which is also in Pasig property, whose ownership has remained in legal limbo since it was surrendered by Marcos associate Jose E. Campos to the Aquino administration in exchange for immunity from suit.

Property developer Ortigas & Co. has since been forced to claim the property, saying the Ortigas family was forced by then President Marcos to sell it under the barrel of a gun.

Ortigas & Co. has been trying to nail a compensation deal with the PCGG where it will surrender 63 percent of the property to the state and retain only 37 percent.

The deal has failed to prosper, however, due to disagreement over just exactly how much the property is worth.

Abcede, who heads the PCGG's asset management division, has said that the property—which sits adjacent to the Ortigas central business district—should be worth as much as P18 billion since it is fully developed.

Ortigas & Co., on the other hand, point out that the property is nothing more than new land, and should be valued at no more than P3 billion.

Ortigas' view is supported by property consultant Cuervo Appraisers Inc. while Abcede said his valuation is supported by another study commissioned by the agency.

As far as Pasig Printing is concerned, however, it would have gain deal where they entered into an agreement with the PCGG in 2001 for the lease of the Metrowalk property.

Low rent, high income

According to the lease documents, Pasig Printing would pay PCGG a rental fee of P750,000 a month. This amount would rise by 5 percent on the second and third years, and by 10 percent on the fourth year, after which it would toggle.

Financial records of Pasig Printing were unavailable but it is reasonable to assume that Metrowalk makes substantially more in terms of rentals and royalties from sub-lessees, given the volume of business and foot traffic that the shopping center attracts.

The lease is up for renewal or renegotiation next year.

Abcede denies that Singson and Pasig Printing are being given preferential treatment on the lease contract by virtue of the Ilocos governor's links to the Palace.

"It is not true," Abcede said. "Metrowalk's rent will be raised to market value."

Abcede concedes, however, that the government has been on the short end of several lease contracts on the Pasong property covered into by past PCGG heads—a situation he says he is trying to correct.

Lots of money in legal limbo

"That's why I've been trying to renegotiate these contracts as they come up for renewal," he said.

The PCGG official said that he managed to raise the rent of West Home Industrial Co.—the owner of Ortigas Home Depot along the Ortigas Avenue Extension property—from a mere P75 per square meter to P120 per square meter. He is also negotiating for higher rent from Gold Bark, another lessee on the property.

At present, a middle ground has yet to emerge between the two opposing positions of the Ortigas family and the PCGG.

The status quo hardly sits well for Metrowalk and the other tenants of the Pasong property, say insiders. If for the government which still likely continue to receive below-market rental fees.

"The thing is, this impasse is keeping the property in legal limbo, and some people are making a lot of money out of it," according to an official familiar with the negotiations between Ortigas and PCGG. "The government is being deprived of rental income while Ortigas is being denied the use of its property."

Neda chief: Some gov't regulatory firms 'captured' by big business

Turn to page A-2

goods and passengers and for the high production costs in the economy.

The Neda chief said the cost of handling cargo in Philippine ports was very high, resulting in higher prices being paid by consumers.

This is because high transport costs—mainly if it's port-related—of agriculture, fishery and manufactured goods are eventually passed on to end-users, he said.

The Philippine Ports Authority, the government agency responsible for developing terminals, facilities and services in the country's ports, needed to be reformed, he said.

NEDA Chief Cayetano

Monopolistic

The job of loading and unloading merchandise in the country's piers and wharves is done by a few private arrastre companies. Neda said a revamp of the PPA would correct this monopolistic scheme.

As many critics have pointed out, the PPA's regulatory function has to be separated from its function as the owner of the country's ports.

Another case in point is the manner in which despite the regulatory presence of the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), has remained prohibitive for most Filipinos, said Neda.

The CAB is the agency that regulates, promotes and develops the economic aspects of civil aviation. It is responsible for approving air services agreements with foreign carriers.

Though the country has adopted a partial "open skies" policy—opening up certain airports like Clark to more foreign airlines—CAB has not done anything to bring down the cost of air travel, said Neda.

Liberalize airlines

"It's not effective. We would be better off liberalizing [the entire airline industry]... that way you bring in more tourists," he said.

Liberalizing the airline industry would mean CAB would have to be more about patrolling our airlines, thus allowing more airlines to operate here. Such a move would considerably bring down the cost of air travel.

Neda called on the state regulatory agencies to "change their mindsets and attitudes."

He said he was making this criticism of the regulatory agencies as "that people will be aware that there is such a thing as regulatory capture."

Therefore, they are under these agencies know that they are being watched, he said. Reuters, Joy C. Santos, Inquirer Research

It's no lobby; it's advocacy, drug firms insist

By Nikko Dizon

IT IS NOT A LOBBY, IT'S ADVOCACY.

This was how an official of the Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP) described the group's interest in House Bill No. 6025 which seeks to lower the prices of medicines in the country.

"It is not correct to say that PHAP is lobbying against the bill. It is engaged in an aggressive advocacy because of the issues involved. Public health is primary here, not the loss of profit," lawyer Noel Laman, PHAP spokesperson, said in a press conference.

Laman said that PHAP, an organization of major international drug companies operating in the Philippines, was "never opposed" to providing Filipinos generic access to cheap medicines.

"But the PHAP insists that these cheap medicines must be of good quality. [they] must be effective and most of all, safe," he said.

He added that Filipinos should be made aware that the prevalence of bogus drugs in Southeast Asia "has reached alarming" figures.

Pfizer, meanwhile, denied media reports that they attempted to block the passage of House Bill No. 6025.

In a statement e-mailed to the Inquirer, Pfizer said that during the special congressional session on Feb. 20, which included deliberations to amend the intellectual property code, the pharmaceutical company had just one representative present among various government organizations, government officials, public-interest groups and members of the PHAP.

"As a leading pharmaceutical company providing access to innovative medicines to thousands of patients in the Philippines, Pfizer believes it has a responsibility to participate actively in critical deliberations pertaining to health care. Any suggestion that the company acted in an unstructured manner is simply untrue and contrary to Pfizer values," Pfizer said.

The PHAP also stood by its lawyers, who never showed one of the Senate staff last Wednesday after they slipped a note in Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr., asking him to question the quorum while House Bill No. 6365 was being discussed on the floor.

Lamentadores (Nonpersons) to take action against the PHAP lawyers.

"The lawyers were simply being protecting the right of PHAP," Laman said, adding that there was apparently no quorum on the second day of the Congress' special session which had "shrunken" the PHAP lawyers.

"Why would only a handful of congressmen discuss and pass a measure like that?" he noted.

The lawyers wrote that they "desperately needed" help in question the quorum.

"In fact, their concerns were valid. The bill was passed [on a second reading]. How are they passed with [only] 15-20 congressmen [deliberating on the bill]?" Lamen said.

He added that PHAP was positively convinced about some amendments inserted in the bill, such as the introduction of a price regulatory board, which would in effect, control the maximum prices of goods.

"PHAP believes that the House bill, in its present form, without any further amendments, without innovation of regulatory safeguard, will open the floodgates for the importation of any and all kinds of medicines," Lamen said.

Erap lawyers cite 'Hello Garci' in plea

By Jocelyn R. Uy

SOMEONE THERE, BUT WHAT OTHER arguments can they raise?

Lawyers yesterday told the Sandiganbayan that luring their client, detained former President Joseph Estrada, help the opposition in its campaign might throw more light on the "Hello Garci" controversy which they claimed remained a threat to a clean elections.

"It is very important then that [Estrada] be allowed to be accosted by the people, who have the right to know, directly and indirectly to help resolve the issue," lawyer Rene Saguisag said in asking the anti-graft court to let Estrada stay in his San Juan home or allow the media and his use of mobile phones in his "limited, not house in the duration of the campaign.

Saguisag said that though President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo apologized for the impropriety of calling Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano regarding results of vote counting in Mindanao in 2004, the issue remained unresolved.

"If the Genuine Opposition gets clobbered credibly with [Estrada] helping lead the campaign, the truants should subside, as the opposition would have to move and tick to seconds," Saguisag said.

HE'S EVERYWHERE
The ubiquitous image of senatorial candidate Cesar Montano jumps out of this advertising panel but is largely ignored by those two pedestrians in Baguio City. The Comelec has ordered that the advertising posters above election bets and could result in the disqualification of the Team Unity candidate, the day earlier this week. Montano personally bore down billboards bearing his image. INQUIRER/RICHARD VISPERAS JR.

Cardinal backs Baja extension at UN

By Cynthia D. Balana

MANILA, PHILIPPINES—SAMUEL CARDINAL Rosales has asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to retain Ambassador Lauro Baja as the country's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York.

Rosales sent a letter to Ms Arroyo dated Feb. 12, a copy of which was released to diplomatic reporters.

He made the endorsement after he received a letter from Baja who had sought the Cardinal's intervention.

Baja has been elected vice president of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a position he will have to relinquish if removed from the UN.

As ECOSOC vice president, Baja has access to prominent and heads of the bodies and agencies under the council in areas of disaster relief and assistance, anti-poverty arrangements, development programs and capacity building for the country's economic and social needs.

Rosales asked the President to give Baja a chance to complete his term in ECOSOC, one of the UN's six principal organs.

Baja is the first Filipino diplomat since the late Carlos P. Romulo in the 1950s and the late Salvador P. Lopez in the 1960s to be honored.

Baja, who is still in New York, has been recalled to the Department of Foreign Affairs after the President appointed his replacement, former Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. as the Philippine representative to the UN.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said Davide was scheduled to leave for the UN yesterday, and assume his new post today.

The propriety and legality of Davide's appointment to vacate the subject of a petition pending before the Supreme Court.

"All things considered, Ambassador Baja's request and this present endorsement are, in no way, made to forfeit the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador and Permanent Representative-designate. I also know and respect," said Rosales in the letter to the President.

Tessie bats for state-of-the-art schools

ARANETA CANDIDATE TESSIE Aquino-Oreta has urged the government to invest in the state-of-the-art school facilities for big national high schools in every region.

"I envision to establish one state-of-the-art school in every region with modern facilities at par with those of the private schools. We need to give equal opportunity to all," Aquino-Oreta said in a press statement.

Aquino-Oreta said that a law should be legislated to formulate a comprehensive program for the school modernization of our schools to improve the quality of our public school education.

Every state-of-art school should be equipped with modern science laboratories and computer facilities, complete libraries, well-lighted and well-ventilated classrooms enough to cater to students in the area, a gymnasium and a 1:1 textbook ratio, she said.

"We can harness the local school boards and private associations to get additional funds so we can maximize the facilities for these schools," she said.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM
Region XII
Provincial Agrarian Reform Office
Kidapawan City

November 30, 2006

Notice of Coverage

The following landholdings in the province of Cotabato, the landowners of which are considered absentee, are covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP):

	Land Owners	Title No.	Lot & Survey No.	Area	Location
1.	Dilando Gupta	P-36817	995, Pls-59	7.0738	Gmaliman, Kid.
2.	Maxima Diaz	P-34804	300, Pls-59	16.0736	Amasan, Kid.
3.	Candida Diaz	T-48551	H-167101	17.7300	Kalaisan, Kid.
4.	Leo Rafin	T-8287	114, C-1, Psd-12-00592	15.5999	Poblacion, Kid.
5.	Leo Rafin	T-8870	114, C-1, Psd-12-00592	25.000	Kalaisan, Kid.
6.	Celdo, Inc.	T-53776	196, C, Cad-5053	3.6000	Kalligoonan, Kid.
7.	Celdo, Inc.	T-53777	196-A, Cad-5056	11.0436	Kalligoonan, Kid.
8.	Sultan Dinde Kisan	T-23942	(I-V-)23421	35.2012	Sikitan, Kid.
		T-24137	Lot 109-B, Psd-56193	34.5032	Sikitan, Kid.
		T-24138	Lot 109-A, Psd-56193	34.4003	Sikitan, Kid.
9.	Rolando Mendoza	P-34992	76, Bsd-11021	12.4238	Mawkalkalig, Kid.
10.	Paulino Mendoza, Jr.	P-35743	32, Bsd-11021	12.4483	Mawkalkalig, Kid.
11.	Eduardo Mendoza	P-35743	109, 86, 91, Bsd-11021	11.5150	Mawkalkalig, Kid.
12.	Eliseo Fajardo	P-31992	467, Pls-111	6.7973	Macoon, Arakan
13.	Renacio Flores	P-35527	44, Pls-715	1.0755	Macoon, Arakan
14.	Gabriel Cajela	V-1329	870, Pls-696	0.3887	Danduman, Ara
15.	Leon Dela Cruz	V-1324	862, Pls-696	0.3389	do
16.	Simanga Masangkay	V-1271	812, Pls-696	0.1799	do

(Sgd.) **ENGR. MARION Y. ABELLA, CESO II**
Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer II

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM
Region XII
Provincial Agrarian Reform Office
Kidapawan City

February 14, 2007

Notice of Coverage

The following landholdings in the province of Cotabato, the landowners of which are considered absentee, are covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP):

	Land Owners	Title No.	Lot & Survey No.	Area	Location
1.	Heracleo Gupiton	P-46827	64, Pls-715	0.9799	Macoon, Arakan
2.	Bobi Fajardo	T-58711	67, Pls-715	0.9383	Malitubugan, Ara
3.	Sotio Fajardo	T-8841	111 Bsd-20417	2.9847	Salvador, Ara.
4.	Samson Casar	P-51430	351, Pls-715	0.9888	Malitubugan, Ara
5.	Alejandro Casar	P-51429	352, Pls-715	7.4935	Malitubugan, Ara
6.	Prospero Chanez	P-40080	176, Pls-826	9.0878	Badangan, Ara.
7.	Hodori Layden	P-25223	8760, Pls-55	71.1034	Lilibo-o, P. Rosas
8.	Bernabe Ibarrola	T-58974	166, Pls-696	0.5894	Tibao, Allang
9.	Bernabe Ibarrola	P-38048	283, Bsd-20417	4.4323	Kamanikan, Rosas
10.	Bernabe Ibarrola	T-34097	3285-A, Psd-12-005355	5.0127	Bulusan, P Rosas
11.	Bernabe Ibarrola	T-40102	164, Bsd-20417	4.7353	Salvacion, P. Rosas
12.	Bernabe Ibarrola	T-65391	237-B, Psd-166712	0.9837	Kamanikan,P Rosas
13.	Justiniano Ibarrola	V-7332	134, Bsd-20419	4.7812	Arnias, Rid. City
14.	Justiniano Ibarrola	P-52340	C, Csc-12-0000664-D	2.9774	Cayola, Kid. City

(Sgd.) **ENGR. MARION Y. ABELLA, CESO II**
Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer II

TRAVEL BAN

Abra gov placed on hold order list

By Jerome Aning

THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION (BI) placed Abra Gov. Vicente Valera on its hold-departure list in connection with the charges of illegal possession of firearms filed against him before a Quezon City court.

Associate Commissioner Roy Almaro said he issued the hold-departure order against Valera in compliance with an order from Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 223 Judge Ramon Cruz.

Thus, Valera will not be allowed to travel abroad without the court's permission.

In his two-page order, Judge Cruz upheld the court's inherent power to restrict persons charged with crimes from traveling out of the country in order to facilitate the speedy trial of their cases.

The judge dismissed the claim of Valera's lawyers that the hold-departure order would violate their climate constitutional right to travel.

Cruz added that since Valera was out on bail, it was the court's discretion to issue the order, adding that prosecutors have submitted a police intelligence report that the accused planned to leave the country.

The travel ban on Valera stemmed from the charges of illegal possession of firearms, explosives and ammunition that were filed against the governor after policemen arrested him in Quezon City last Dec. 29.

He was apprehended after policemen manning a checkpoint flagged down his car which had no license plates and allegedly found firearms and grenades inside the vehicle.

Valera was later released from jail on Jan. 3 after he posted a bail of P110,000 for his temporary liberty.

Reports recently showed that Valera had been in the immigration watchlist since last Dec. 22, after he was linked to the murder of Mila's Bay, Luis Bonanza Jr., who was gunned down with his bodyguard outside a church in Quezon City last Dec. 16.

The watchlist order was issued by Immigration Associate Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. upon orders from Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

US ship docks at Subic port

A US AMPHIBIOUS TRANSPORT SHIP carrying more than 600 sailors and Marines arrived in Subic this yesterday for a goodwill visit that includes free medical services and a daycare for children, an official said.

The USS Juneau docked at Subic Bay Free Port for a four-day visit, US Marine Capt. Burrell Parmer said.

The sailors and Marines from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit based in Okinawa, Japan, will offer free medical and dental services to local communities and deliver humanitarian supplies donated by families of US Marine and Navy personnel, he said.

Local school children will also be given a tour of the ship, Parmer said.

The goodwill visit is separate from ongoing military exercises between US and Philippine troops aimed at reducing al-Qaeda-linked militants in the southern Philippines.

A 600-strong US military contingent is taking part in the Feb. 16-March 4 annual exercises dubbed "Balikatan," which means "shouldering the load together," with Filipino troops.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, February 24, 2007
Sarurday After Ash Wednesday

1st Reading: Is 58:9-14
Gospel: Luke 5:27-32

Jesus noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax office. He said to him, "Follow me." He [Levi], leaving everything, got up and followed Jesus.

Levi gave a great feast for Jesus, and many tax collectors came to his house and took their place at table with the other people. Then the Pharisees and their fellow teachers complained to Jesus' disciples, "How is it that you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" But Jesus spoke up, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. I have come to call to repentance, I call sinners, not the righteous."

Commentary

Listen again to what we are to fast from and rejoice from our lives: oppression, false accusation, malicious speech. And instead we are to practice sharing generously our bread and our care for the afflicted. And God will respond graciously, strongly, guiding us and sending light into our lives, giving us his Word. We must begin to rejoice. We must refuse to be examined by sin, and practice goodness and justice. Abortion is called and he sends up and follows. We are called and we are to follow behind anything else threatens us from living in Jesus' company. This is the season when we examine our lives and know that we are sinners and we need a change. We needs change of heart—or to heed the heart of our hearts. Decide—and when we are with Jesus and we eat another, we are called to repent once again and become the friend of [illegible]. Joyfully living and drinking the cup of our salvation.

Gerardo Bulatbulatan Sr., O.Praem. (+ 1915)
Rel. Bibliot. Quezon City, 1st ed. Rev. Ed. (Oct. 2002)
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Denials

EDITORIAL

THE HUSHED DENIALS OF TOP ADMINISTRATION and military officials and the personal tirades they are heaping on United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston only confirm one key conclusion reached by him: that the Armed Forces of the Philippines continues to be "in a state of almost total denial" about the "significant number" of extrajudicial executions that have been "convincingly attributed to them." Alston made this observation, on a representative of the UN Human Rights Council, after a 10-day fact-finding mission in the Philippines. While acknowledging that he didn't have the exact figure, Alston said the number of victims was "high enough to be distressing." And he blamed government forces for most of the killings, dismissing as "unconvincing" the military's explanations that these were the result of a continuing purge being undertaken by the communist New People's Army.

An unrepentant AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon said that if anyone was in denial, it was Alston. He pointed out that the UN official refused to believe that the NPA did the killings. "Is he saying the NPA is more credible than me or the AFP?" he demanded.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez was even more angry and acerbic, saying Alston came with a "preconditioned mind" and allowed himself to be "brainwashed" by leftists. "You can tell that statement that he does not know what he is talking about. He is critical of us, but he is just a rapporteur ... a hired man from the UN."

One day later, Gonzalez changed Alston's job description. "Alston is not the UN," he said. "He is just a machacha there."

If the UN hires people with Alston's impressive credentials as machachas, no wonder Gonzalez isn't working there. But doesn't Gonzalez contradict himself by taking issue with the unflattering observations of someone he considers to be an incompetent underling to the UN organization?

A lot more subdued and reasonable was the reaction of Malacañang. President Macapagal-Arroyo immediately followed Alston's recommendation to reinstate the Melo Commission report on extrajudicial executions and ordered that P25 million be given to the Commission on Human Rights so it could "do more to investigate human rights violations." She also assured Alston that the government would use its resources to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of the killings.

For the President, that marked a significant and welcome turnaround from her position of defending the military against any criticisms of human rights violations and even publicly praising military officials linked to the killings, like the now retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan. But there seems to be a big disconnect between how she thinks cases and the attitude of the top military brass toward the problem.

Alston has likened the military to an alcoholic who doesn't recognize that he has a problem. "Every military has its own excuses," he said, "and the challenge is to acknowledge it and do something about it."

So how far can the President go to bring the perpetrators of extrajudicial killings to justice in the face of the refusal of the military officials and her own justice secretary to acknowledge that there is a problem? How can she and they even begin to solve a problem that they claim to be non-existent?

There is one way for Mr Arroyo to break the impasse: she should find new people who will see things the way she sees them now and act accordingly. In other words, she should just let go of Gonzalez and Esperon, if she wants to solve the killings that have happened in the past and prevent more killings in the future. But will she do it? Can she do it?

Overfishing

FOREIGN COMMENT

THE HALLMARK OF THE OVERFISHING OF OUR OCEANS shows no signs of abating... to fish stocks in coastal waters become more and more depleted, trawlers are moving farther out to sea. Fishing fleets are also searching marine biodiversity. There is only one sane course of action: the governments subsidies should end, human rounding should be outlawed and a system of strict international regulation for high seas fisheries must be established.

According to a major scientific study, there will be virtually nothing left to fish from the seas by the middle of the century if current fishing trends continue.

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Posters and billboards

SEPARATE OPINION

Dagohoy A. Cruz

NOW THAT THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD HAS OFficially begun, we can expect the election laws, if all laws, to be violated instead of enforced. This has happened before and I feel it will happen again this year. The poorer Commission on Elections has not opposed to raise the hope that things will be better; in fact, it has deteriorated so much to breed the fear that things will be much worse.

The most obvious sign of the candidates' contempt of the Omnibus Election Code, and the negligence or deliberate refusal of the Comelec to punish those who violate it, is the proliferation of posters that is likely to uglify Metro Manila again.

Chair Benjamin Abalos of the Comelec was reported the other week as having warned the police chiefs and barangay leaders of Metro Manila that they would be chair-ged administrative charges if they failed to prevent the illegal election posters in their respective jurisdictions. I hope he was not engaged in his usual double-talk that the public has long learned to distrust. He can improve his credibility this time by meaning what he says at last.

If he does not, there is still MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando, who appears to be more effective in his efforts to improve things in Metro Manila. Where the mayors of its component cities have been less than efficient in the execution of their respective problems, Fernando has stepped in to cure their deficiencies. While his measures are not all that praiseworthy, there are several of them, like the regulation of traffic, that have vastly improved the comfort and convenience of its residents.

Despite the alarming loss of lives and property caused by the many billboards fouled by the winds of Milenyo last year, and the hasty action of the government to prohibit them as imposed to public welfare, the true Comelec for such billboards are still there, like skeletal threats to future negligently perpetrated injury. What is more – or worse – they are being used again, as if to dare the authorities.

I emphasized in a previous column that billboards may be prohibited for being offensive to the sense of sight, more as if they threaten not only artistic sensibilities but the more apparent need to protect lives and property. The government failed to do this against the ostentatious lack of election posters that have already converted Metro Manila into a mammoth trial area. Baron Dily, which I also visited at that time, was relatively free of the nuisance that was bedevilling Metro Manila where, significantly, the offices of the Comelec and the police and military commanders are located. It appears that we do not have a Comelec and, possibly other cities too – could control the problem of illegal posters, there was no reason why Metro Manila could not do as well.

During the election campaign for the members of the House of Commons in 1964, London was not plagued with the poster problems we have been suffering every time we have elections here. All I saw in Britain's capital city were pictures of Prime Minister Harold Wilson, then running for re-election, without even his name to identify him; all the posters simply read GO LABOR, in all caps, appropriately placed on the lower left corner for reinforcement point. In California during the 1990 elections, I learned about the campaigns only through small design-like signs recommending a ballot called Issues for mayor. I suppose the candidates let loose the boasts or no-boasts during the party conventions, which are covered by the press only, but unlike here, are undramatic for the rest of the voters undisturbed during the campaign period.

By contrast, the Filipino people are less restrained and more demonstrative. I think it's in our nature to be extravagant, as when even poor families spend hard-earned funds to lavishly celebrate weddings. Elections are also times for festivities, to be adorned with colorful posters, showy streamers and mammoth billboards with airbrushed pictures of candidates seeking public offices for private gain. And of course the entertainers will have the advantage because they are handsomer although not necessarily talented. Or intelligent.

I hope the electorate will learn to exercise their collective better this year and not be beguiled, as usual, with the endowment of good looks or intimidated by guns and goons as evidenced for public office. I remember that when Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ran for Senator in 1995, there were very few posters of her carrying a gun (but she probably hoped she'd make her look like Sen Nene Pimentel in the star's millions of fans. That may have succeeded to the defeat of Edgardo Angara, who was the victorious Joseph Estrada's running mate and is now GMA's lead economist candidate.

Errors in textbooks used by private schools

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

THE ROAD TO HELL IS PAVED WITH GOOD intentions, as saying goes. This apparently aptly applies to the case of primary and secondary level textbooks for private schools.

How did I come to this conclusion? Here is the story: Sigrid S. Bautista (Ph.D. Chemistry, Purdue University), head of the Ateneo Technical Institute in San Antonio, Zambales, sent to the Cebuo National Bookstore searching for a suitable textbook for first year science. She came upon "General Science I," published by St. Augustine Publications (2003), with Msgr. Aderito C. Jones and Rolando L. Calapre listed as authors. (They also appeared to co-authored a textbook for chemistry.)

The book had some attractive features, among which were the indicated range of topics. But it had lapses prior was also helpful. Dr. Bautista almost suffered 200 copies, but she brought home only one copy for closer examination. And that's when she discovered "gross errors," especially in chemistry which is her field of expertise. She turned it over to her physics teacher, who also found errors in his subject.

In her letter to me, Dr. Bautista lists some general deficiencies as well as specific errors. Among the general deficiencies are—to cite detailed cited for the authors (I googled them; I found no trivia for a Magdalena Jones, but a Rolando Calapre is cited as an instructor in the UST College of Education) are unable to help locate specific topics (which is one is a major deficiency), misspellings and faulty grammar; misleading or unsettling discussions because the basic terms used are unexplained; and the notes on prominent scientists are not related to the chapter topics.

Now she goes on to specific technical errors I said. The pages where they are located will—which include an incorrect diagram on the classifications of matter; another diagram which is confusing due to the omission of a key word; yet another diagram which is not only incomplete, but contains the gross error of confusing atoms and molecules, etc., etc.

Now one can pass on back and moan, Dr. Bautista went to see the president of St. Augustine Publications, armed with her copy of the book with all the errors marked, as well as a formal letter "written in the interest of improving our science education in the country. We hope you share the same concern, to better control the quality of the textbooks that bear the name of your company." Dr. Bautista obviously does not mince her words. Unfortunately, the object of her visit was "out," but his secretary soon over the errors with her, and received her letter.

Dr. Bautista then asked for my help to "arouse attention from the bigwigs who have the power to do something." And help her I must. One can do no less for someone who could have taken the easy way out, but chose the more difficult one. Dr. Bautista didn't have to go through all that reading, marking, writing and calling (me, for one)—all she had to do was just look for another textbook. But she is not content to let the people in charge of SPED assigned their textbook and will absorb those errors. She knows that if we want to teach good Math, Science and English, we cannot afford to ignore the textbooks.

Note, dear readers, the publication date of the "General Science I" textbook: 2003. That's long after Ateneo de Zamboanga has taken the rebuke on the errors in chemistry textbooks and seriously long after all kinds of promises were made by all and sundry to ensure the quality of textbooks. I remember, for example, that 18 professors of UP experts in their fields, were called on by the Department of Education to look for errors in textbooks so that they could be corrected, at least by way of "teachers' notes."

First thing I did was to call the DepEd. Only to be told by Dante Ramos of the International Standards Council Secretariat, division of Examination and Training, that while the DepEd may "list the Kinderkit" for the vetting of textbooks, it has no actual authority in reviewing power over textbooks written for, or those by private schools.

This, thanks it seems to Republic Act 8047 (2995), the Book Publishing Industry Development Act. I am told. (This is second hand—I haven't researched the issue) that need these, the DepEd had power of approval over all textbooks. But then came the clamor to "deregulate" the textbook publishing industry, at least for private schools. The reason? Because the private schools thought the textbook standards applied by the DepEd were too low. Good intentions.

Thus, private schools now choose their own textbooks. If there are complaints from parents, the DepEd's powers is limited to calling the attention of the publishers, using moral suasion—unlike the real power it has over public school textbooks, which now must go through a panel of experts/evaluators for approval.

By the way, I am told that there are now many more copyright problems regarding private than public school textbooks books.

Can anything be done about this? Well, the National Book Development Board (NBDB) has a "Quality Seal" program, where it effectively evaluates textbooks for private schools. But it is voluntary—and has few takers. So private school students may be condemned to a hell of textbook errors, the road to which is paved by good intentions.

It is cold comfort to be told that there are textbook errors all over the world. The point is that, given the poor quality of education here, we cannot afford these avoidable mistakes.

Ecumenical prayer for Edsa Anniversary

BY SPECIAL APPOINTMENT ON EXTRAORDINARY, secretary or secretary extraordinary Philip Ella, a law professor of human rights law and international jurisprudence, has made frequent trips to the Netherlands, but he's obviously quite naive...at the very least, about the nature of leftist organization here.

* * *

Home reportedly found it difficult to believe that some above-ground leftist groups could have links or ties with the New People's Army. He obviously thinks that the Left here is like his fellow travelers in developed countries such as France, Italy and India, where they work openly and legally and participate in parliamentary struggle, not through armed means. What they seem failed to appreciate is that although the repeal of the Anti-Subversion Law in the Philippines has encouraged leftist organizations to surface and join mainstream politics, a considerable number have chosen to remain underground and armed. Examples: the communist-armed group Military authorities have tried to make some above-ground leftists withdraw the unwelcome assistance of the NPA, to no avail. Their silence became more deafening when the NPA exacted protection money from the politicians.

* * *

Another difficulty is: While the Philippine military is highly visible because of its structured organization, the same goes are not. In a recent TV interview with Korina Sanchez, Gen. Generoso Senga, head Gen. Delfin asked him where the alleged assassins of militant veterans are. He said they're everywhere, for the fact is that insurgents are armed fighters at night but, perhaps farmers and workers by day. Senga's point is that they are protected by well-defined laws and a punitive system, while the insurgents are not. True, as previous but legal protection now those protected, the military's struggle is no easy one. Indeed, I'm not sure that the Left or insurgency pulled the wool over their eyes in their British studies, in the interests of greater peace, emergency rule supposed to unify all factions rights in order to crush it. Here the leftist

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cassman

factor on those human rights guaranteed by a Commission duly such to thrive on.

* * *

The following ecumenical prayer was specially composed by journalist Alex Magno at the request of the Edsa People Power Commission (EPPC), in commemoration of the 21st anniversary of the 1986 People Power Revolution. The EPPC has arranged, through the Department of the Interior and Local Government, for a simultaneous ringing of church bells throughout the country to provincial capitals, municipal and city halls, across the nation tomorrow, Feb. 25, at 8 a.m., followed by a recitation of this prayer to be led by government and mayors. A similar ring-raising will be done on Feb. 25 at 8 a.m. Secretary of the People Power Monument in Quezon City is to lead by President Macapagal-Arroyo, former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos, Vice President Noli de Castro, Mayor Sandra Magsaysay and other ranking government officials. The EPPC fervently hopes that this prayer, more timely and relevant to our national life than ever before, will also be recited in homes, churches, schools and offices around the nation on the days after the Edsa anniversary.

* * *

"Before we all the ages, You have given us the freedom to shape our destinies to unite and the virtues to surmount together the challenges that confront us in this space, for what is good.

"While there is resentment and despair, You have given us immense capacity to Hope, so that we may see beyond the adversities of the present.

"Where there is much disagreement and mistrust, You have given to the capacity to love, so that we may search to new visions more beyond the things that divide us and build peaceful, strong communities that enable us to be the best we can be.

"Where there is much doubt and distrust, You gave us the gift of Faith, so that we may grasp what lies beyond that which is merely evident, and not seek courage to redeem our humanity.

"In a sea of many voices and much confusion, You have given us the gift of Conscience, so that we may not wish boldness and solidarity, to create a better future for our children and our nation.

"Dear Father, we had to summon all these virtues to replant a regime of fear which was of freedom, an epoch of violence with one of peace, and until a path toward unity and humane development for our people.

"Author of all the ages, we are still treading that path, occasionally threatened by a threat of distrust or a tide of despair. There are points along that path where it seems we can push no further, when we are gripped by doubt about the direction we take.

"Break you, Father, in exception the virtues You have given us, so that we can build a society that is humane and peaceful, and economically that does not exist.

"All we ask, in response to return, Father, is an unfailing desire for what is peaceful, what is righteous, what is good. Amen."

* * *

A grand reunion of 65 alumnae of the Dalta Pasay campus—the "Dalta generation" years ago is the transfer to Batangas in mid-1949—will be held this Thursday, March 1, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Bahay ng Alumni in Silliman, QC. Calling themselves the "Survivors," those expected to attend the 1950 Grand luncheon will be members of the graduating classes in the war-damaged buildings, such as the old Cancer sanitarium and research in Ermita, then a open wheelchairs. While admitting on thinning ranks, it's a tightly knit group that meets regularly and includes doctors, lawyers, businessmen, farmers and painters painter "no apostles, no politicking...no plans for and commissaries." Please confirm your attendance at 563-8271 or 911-2019.

* * *

Catch Global Top Dog Ignatius and Manila Hotel president Ray Lim reminisce on Edsa I with Cecile Alumbro and myself tomorrow at 9:15 p.m., over dzRH.

One secret of success

THE SCRIPT IS CLEARLY NOT THE WORK OF A professional or a product of any high-tech studio. The lighting at times is poor and there are background noises, but there's only cold comfort in these apparent flaws; the love of a family is apt, fastbeating and true describes the effort to preserve native to family planning (NFP), the emotion that at first when the one time the abstinence came around, he was hesitant to say yes. He was willing to say to go out and drink talk with his barkada, also to wear dinner glasses he would go home feeling tired and ready to go to sleep immediately! After time, however, he became used to it and could abstain without the aid of clocks.

The wife also found it easy saying how the pure effort inspired by NFP has improved their relationship and their mutual respect. Her husband resolved to a partner in building their family, not simply sore object. And their daughter gave us to say that she owns the opportunity to study in College in part to the practice of NFP by her family and to their children as they could afford to care for and educate.

Nothing here about the impact of population growth on gross national product or gross domestic product, or population management. It is about a couple's search for a way to simplify their family's troubles and set their prospects for moving out of poverty. The impact is obvious in the case of small farmers with limited amounts of land: if the land is to be divided to the next generation among many children, there will not be enough to go all around, and the children are the losers. The agricultural resource is effectively closed; practically all of the land available for agriculture is under the plow and we have already cut the axe deeply into the reserves of forest land.

What about economic employment? Education has to be the best basis in the world and urban settings. And research shows as one might expect, that educational as well as health expenditures per individual decrease automatically with the

Commentary

John J. Carroll, S.J.
John J. Carroll is an Church and Social Issues

number of children in the family. Education expenditures per individual in a family with only one child are more than FIVE TIMES as the year 2000 for a family of nine (they were only FIVE per individual). Health expenditures per individual dropped from P1,700 for a family with one child to P1,10 for a family with nine or more.

Behind all these statistics is the shortage of low-skilled and low-paying jobs. We are thirsty and again in Panama, and we are doing what we can by providing scholarships, mainly for vocational courses, to young people coming out of high school. The acknowledged economic progress we recently made in Vietnam ranges jobs of less than six months' duration. Although even this is a much-appreciated boon to the families, the job market for young people even with some vocational skills is at right than a substantial mass. Even the jobs that require higher education and educational seem.

The conclusion seems inescapable that, whether or not large families mean poverty, a large number of children makes it more difficult for them to rise from poverty.

Equally inescapable is the conclusion that the three decades of [illegible] have not been the years of a one of the most important and momentous events in the life of a couple, and should be the product of a free decision by husband and wife.

Some families, however, do manage to escape from poverty by way of education for their children. That is illustrated by the study reported by Quentin H. Lee Chan in the business last Feb. 2.

One group studied young people from relatively poor families, graduates of public high schools, who have done well in college, even in elite colleges and universities. The second group was drawn from wealthy backgrounds and private high schools. The study, they find, has its limitations since it studied the family namely "discipline, goal-setting, self-reliance, strong family bonds and a positive family environment."

Interestingly, there seem to be the same values which are promoted by NFP. This would suggest that practicing NFP may produce a double advantage to the family: the desired number of children, and children equipped with the values which lead to success.

It is sad that discussion along this line among many Church people get hung up on whether or not there is a population problem, or on the specific method of NFP to be promoted. Whether or not there is a population problem at the national level, there is a population problem at the family level, and NFP is a unique way of dealing with the national economic development, one needs only to visit a slum community to see the impact of family size on the poor. Meanwhile, about half of Filipino women are practicing some form of family planning, and one of the very reasons why it is acceptable to the Church and which we do not is when the values spoken of above. Moreover, one-fourth of women in the poorest fifth of the population want no more children at least for now, and are doing nothing to avoid another pregnancy. Here is an opportunity "big as a barn door" for Church-sponsored NFP.

If the Church is to make its opposition to contraception credible, it must give poor couples a positive alternative, rather than imply, as their doctrine does, that not only the poverty problem is their child. The Philippines of [illegible] one model of a program which is both broad and deep, reaching a whole geographical area down to the barangay and chapel level.

Energy independence: a perilous fantasy

THE PHRASES IN TODAY'S QUEST FOR ENERGY independence so far pursuing is yet only in many energy insecurity. However much politicians who call for energy independence might prefer it otherwise, the market has thrown cold water on their solid invention of oil reserves, an infinite oil source in their countries depend, nor the economy remains on the chronic of energy independence. Even the United States, the world's largest petroleum user has not been about other countries, but they should it had rules time they learn their area.

The biggest threat to the world's energy security are not terrorist attacks or embargoes by oil producing countries—these can be managed by the use of stockpiles and effectively through various measures, including tolerance of energy price short reserves, increases in production and diversion of oil shipments. Instead, the main threat to the long-term security of energy supplies is the failure to make much necessary investment in additional capacity for energy infrastructure, on one hand, and powerful domestic energy on the other.

Misled oil exporters can respond in a variety of ways to artificial restrictions on energy. Some of which exacerbate rather than ameliorate the global energy situation. One of the most plausible scenarios in response to calls by governments and politicians around the world to reduce or even eliminate dependence on oil is a relative decline in investment in additional production capacity in the oil-producing countries.

An energy crisis in this case is almost certain if there is no other fuel that can replace oil to provide a workable alternative for timely motive. Of course, those efforts will obtain surely fail to replace oil which is reasonable value, as they are not available, driven and require heavy subsidies.

Indeed, confronted by the hostile climate of political leaders, oil producers have a strong incentive to increase production in order to lower oil prices to levels that undermine the economic feasibility of alternative energy sources—a typical investment-limiting policy in response to the anti-consumption policies of consuming countries. After all, a collapse in oil prices will be a death sentence for several new energy technologies, and, not incidentally, it will increase the demand for oil.

Even if the oil-producing countries do not intentionally bring about an oil price collapse, they might accelerate production as much as they could in the short term, while oil still had some value. But a near oil price, coupled with expectations of a decline in demand, would in no's put pressure on oil-producing countries to bolster planned investment in production capacity or even to maintain it at current levels. Thus, if alternative energy technologies did not come on line by the time oil production started to fall, good, that price would become inevitable, while closing the investment decline would take years, even decades, to [illegible] of rising oil prices.

In spite of these possibilities, let's assume that plans for energy independence succeed, and that several European countries, the United States, Japan, China and India become self-sufficient. Major oil exporters would then seek to use their new but valuable oil at home as cheap fuel for an exported basis industrial sector instead of exporting oil directly, they could export their energy embedded in metals, chemicals and manufactured products at prices determined by the energy producers in the oil-consuming countries, especially Europe and the United States, could much, given their dependence on higher cost alternative energy sources.

Energy independence would thus not end oil's influence, especially petrodollars, its tension and need. In fact, cheap energy in oil producing countries might make their new industries competitive with those in China, India and Southeast Asia. In the end, energy security is a matter of jobs and structural economies. Countries might end up energy independent, only to become more dependent on petrochemical dependence.

So what would come next? Would politicians, with their powerful economic tools "instrument-driven," attempt to eliminate dependency one commodity at a time? For another way, wouldn't be cases of "energy independence" and to reverse globalization?

The is a finite resource. Only long-term, market-oriented, economically stable and sustainable energy options can ensure economic growth in both producing and consuming countries. Intervention policies, by contrast, always lead to economic distortions, and the latter how long-run energy independence is pursued, it will never amount to anything other than an unattainable—and perhaps costly—fantasy. — Project Syndicate

A. F. Alhajji is an energy economist and professor at Ohio Northern University. Gavin Longmuir is a part-time energy engineer affiliated with the International American Consultancy Association.

Life isn't about money

IT HAS NOT PREMEDITATE, BUT NEITHER WAS IT An accident. Perhaps it was fate that brought me here to the world of NGOs. In for almost four years now, I have been working with only government organizations—with two different groups, to be exact.

It is not where I had wanted to be. The first few years after graduation were according to plan. I worked in a multinational corporation, [illegible] for cutting-edge [illegible] but [illegible] and [illegible] and [illegible] I would rise up the organizational ladder. I was then a typical [illegible] going, trying to make a name in the corporate world and [illegible] optimistic that I would be successful in my career.

From time to time, I would question my motivations and consciously remind myself that money would not [illegible] and I would be living the good life.

Then, late began performing rites. The company that I had once hoped working for until the twilight of my career started to experience the effects of an economic crisis. Who would have thought that a company that was raking and profiting [illegible] would start to go bankrupt and to tighten its belt to the point of forcing out workers who had been loyal through the years, just to remain afloat?

I was one out one, but I found myself wanting to go. At that point, how pleased number circle on a case of perfect timing. A former boss of mine in the multinational corporation-big government supply for a vacant position in her non-commercial NGO.

The decision to join the NGO didn't come easily. There were second thoughts and many sleepless nights, but eventually I decided to give it a shot. Anyway, I thought, the organization also had a good international standing. What didn't cross my mind was the effect it would have on my perspectives and how I saw myself and my future.

When I decided to join the organization, I told myself that once opportunity knocks on my door again, I would just push up and go. My [illegible] was set for two years. After which, I promised myself, I would be a comfortable, air-conditioned office in the corporate world.

But as tragedy so often passed, opportunity has not come yet and my now-set tit. So I spent a handful of years in the organization, and enjoyed every single day of it. The two years passed and then another, and the wrong didn't to go back to the corporate world. Instead, I stayed.

Once again, fate knocked on my door. And this time, I graciously accepted when was presented to me. Yes, I remember, not to join another company but another NGO.

At this point of my career, I find that I have fallen in love with the world I am in now. Many have asked me why, and my usual response remains the same: "There is an added feeling of fulfillment when you work to provide for your basic needs and earn a living while at the same time help change the lives of the many poor people in our country."

Just recently, I was promoted to be in charge of training. Perhaps I would have been able to earn more in corporate or another progressive country, if I were still in the other world. Nevertheless, it was still a trip outside the country and it turned out to be a good one.

The administrative category of Nepal is very beautiful. It boasts of the Himalayas, the Mount Everest, and many people who are as hospitable as Filipinos. Being the home of eight of the world's 10 highest mountains, including the highest of them all, Mt. Everest, Nepal is a popular destination for adventurous mountain climbers, including recently a handful from the Philippines.

Still, it is not an ideal place to live in. The majority of the people are poor and many suffer discrimination. Kathmandu, its capital and business center, is in fact not as progressive and cosmopolitan.

Filipinos are still fortunate to be living in our part of the globe. We have our share of problems, but we are not the worst situation. Thanks to the ICT, I intend to appreciate all the things I have now and I realize that I am still rich, after all.

The best thing about this trip is that it validated the correctness of the choice I made to shift in the NGO world. In my little private view, the most I feel happy and inspired about my work, the more I feel I am doing the right thing for communities, the more I feel enlightened about my decisions, my desire to see the transformation in the lives of the many people whom we work with, the more then I want to stay where I am now. I feel proud to be part of an organization that values people and improves the lives of many poor people around the world.

My classmates in college continue to persuade me to go back to where money is. "Making money ang GAL," they keep reminding me.

It is true that I do not want to go back and wait big bucks for me and my family. I will decide to be there again one day, but my goal is no longer as strong as it used to be. I still have true dream though, but probably not for now. Until this day that home in my heart is an overwhelming positive effect people around me. I feel the warmth of love still burns for me and for others.

I regret the feeling of fulfillment I get from doing the little things that contribute to the achievement of my organizations mission and work. And I look forward to moving to the next two efforts later on the past, the marginalized and the disadvantaged among whom we work.

Anyway, life is not all about money.

Jaser T. Marcelo, 28, is connected with Hight International Philippines, a non-profit, not-for-profit organization, based quartered in Little Rock, Arkansas, USA.

Young Blood

Jaser T. Marcelo

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? Or unfashionable contentions? From the morning-something until before ... Editor.

I remember my first day of work. I was so excited. I thought that my first day would be the turning point in my life. I would finally be earning my own money and I would be living the good life.

Then, late began performing rites. The company that I had once hoped working for until the twilight of my career started to experience the effects of an economic crisis. Who would have thought that a company that was raking and profiting [illegible] would start to go bankrupt and to tighten its belt to the point of forcing out workers who had been loyal through the years, just to remain afloat?

I was one out one, but I found myself wanting to go. At that point, how pleased number circle on a case of perfect timing. A former boss of mine in the multinational corporation-big government supply for a vacant position in her non-commercial NGO.

The decision to join the NGO didn't come easily. There were second thoughts and many sleepless nights, but eventually I decided to give it a shot. Anyway, I thought, the organization also had a good international standing. What didn't cross my mind was the effect it would have on my perspectives and how I saw myself and my future.

When I decided to join the organization, I told myself that once opportunity knocks on my door again, I would just push up and go. My [illegible] was set for two years. After which, I promised myself, I would be a comfortable, air-conditioned office in the corporate world.

But as tragedy so often passed, opportunity has not come yet and my now-set tit. So I spent a handful of years in the organization, and enjoyed every single day of it. The two years passed and then another, and the wrong didn't to go back to the corporate world. Instead, I stayed.

Once again, fate knocked on my door. And this time, I graciously accepted when was presented to me. Yes, I remember, not to join another company but another NGO.

At this point of my career, I find that I have fallen in love with the world I am in now. Many have asked me why, and my usual response remains the same: "There is an added feeling of fulfillment when you work to provide for your basic needs and earn a living while at the same time help change the lives of the many poor people in our country."

Just recently, I was promoted to be in charge of training. Perhaps I would have been able to earn more in corporate or another progressive country, if I were still in the other world. Nevertheless, it was still a trip outside the country and it turned out to be a good one.

The administrative category of Nepal is very beautiful. It boasts of the Himalayas, the Mount Everest, and many people who are as hospitable as Filipinos. Being the home of eight of the world's 10 highest mountains, including the highest of them all, Mt. Everest, Nepal is a popular destination for adventurous mountain climbers, including recently a handful from the Philippines.

Still, it is not an ideal place to live in. The majority of the people are poor and many suffer discrimination. Kathmandu, its capital and business center, is in fact not as progressive and cosmopolitan.

Filipinos are still fortunate to be living in our part of the globe. We have our share of problems, but we are not the worst situation. Thanks to the ICT, I intend to appreciate all the things I have now and I realize that I am still rich, after all.

The best thing about this trip is that it validated the correctness of the choice I made to shift in the NGO world. In my little private view, the most I feel happy and inspired about my work, the more I feel I am doing the right thing for communities, the more I feel enlightened about my decisions, my desire to see the transformation in the lives of the many people whom we work with, the more then I want to stay where I am now. I feel proud to be part of an organization that values people and improves the lives of many poor people around the world.

My classmates in college continue to persuade me to go back to where money is. "Making money ang GAL," they keep reminding me.

It is true that I do not want to go back and wait big bucks for me and my family. I will decide to be there again one day, but my goal is no longer as strong as it used to be. I still have true dream though, but probably not for now. Until this day that home in my heart is an overwhelming positive effect people around me. I feel the warmth of love still burns for me and for others.

I regret the feeling of fulfillment I get from doing the little things that contribute to the achievement of my organizations mission and work. And I look forward to moving to the next two efforts later on the past, the marginalized and the disadvantaged among whom we work.

Anyway, life is not all about money.

Jaser T. Marcelo, 28, is connected with Hight International Philippines, a non-profit, not-for-profit organization, based quartered in Little Rock, Arkansas, USA.

Notice to Youngblood contributors:

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They Said

Most affected

"[T]he effects of climate change are being felt across the globe. But it is the poor, in Africa and developing small island states and elsewhere, who will suffer the most, even though they are the least responsible for global warming."

—UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in statement on global warming, addressing environment ministers from around the world

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A black eye for tourism

THE NEWSWEEK REPORTS ON THE ALleged coverage to bishop Philippine Tourism Authority's Oscar Bathrex in recycle Boracay have given tourism a black eye.

If PTA's general manager is not safe in his own country how do we expect to entice foreign tourists to come to the Philippines? All the efforts of our tourism authority will go down the drain.

On the other hand, if Bathrex' allegation is merely to cover up a "media" lie and a bruised ego, then he must resign. He must resign for making Philippine tourism's image, but more importantly, for removing a (he for his apology will suffice. Good government does not need public officials of such character.

The lawmen demands full disclosure of the truth and the culprit(s) should be punished accordingly.

—ROMMEL ARQUILA,
science instructor of tourism,
UPHmai, Quezon City

What the solemn duty to vote entails

THERE IS SOMETHING THAT THE 2007 election season inspires us.

As in years past, the Concerned Women of the Philippines invites us all spirited re-election to the solemn duty of all citizens to vote and, in so doing, to bear in mind what makes a worthy public servant—all scientist and superlative, integrity, honesty, a sense of public accountability and strong dedication to the common good.

In between us, voters, to subject the track record of each aspirant to public office and to exact right screening so that we can make ourselves that those we elect will be the ones who can and will work for the realization of our people's aspirations.

We must earnestly ask that all of us, as a moment and more, take these reminders to heart, and with enlightened minds, make our final choices this coming 14th election with a clear conscience.

—ELIANA BOCBAUP CRUZ, chair,
Concerned Women of the Philippines,
389 Kalipunan ave., Loyola Heights, QC

LETTERS

False economics

REPORT: GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO gets marked down by her three senior Cabinet economic advisers, will someone please remind her that the Philippine economy is nowhere near recovering? Then our dollar exchange rate is down and our stock market is up are primarily due to international factors, such as the weak US dollar and down trending US economy.

In fact, all other economies in Asia, mostly based on the US dollar, are soaring. For example, Thailand is now less than 34 baht to a US dollar.

The fact that our dollar remittances are high should not be a reason for rejoicing either. It only shows that more and more Filipinos, forced to work overseas, cannot enjoy their hard-earned money; they have to scrimp instead so they can send their money to their loved ones (back home), who need the money more than they do.

—JOSELITO SANTOS, zubo@yahoo.com

Gov clarifies statement on Pacman's plans

THAT IS NO DIFFERENCE TO THE NEWS item titled "Pacquiao says he'll quit boxing if he wins election." (Inquirer, 2/15/07)

According to the report, "South Cotabato Gov Daisy Avance Fuentes, another opposition ally, criticized the administration for sponsoring a supposed 'incompetent' like Pacquiao."

It is very unfortunate that my counterparts in a radio interview regarding statements that I believe all political parties must observe in fielding their candidates, was misquoted in the news story.

I wish to point out that my statement was not directed solely at the administration but to all parties, regardless of political affiliations. In that interview, I stressed a fundamental imperative: all political parties must thoroughly and carefully screen and select their candidates for both local and national posts in the interest of good and responsible governance. The private must choose candidates who are endowed with the requisite qualifications, to ensure that the candidates are adequately prepared to fulfill the myriad tasks of government.

While it is true that there is no particular profession best attuned to the demands of public service, I believe that academic preparation—aside from political experience and exposure—is necessary for one to excel in it, if not a plus factor for one who yearns for political status and the world of public service. Of course, honesty and integrity, and the strong will and passion to serve, are essential requisites.) This is a fair and reasonable standard. It is my means to discriminate against particular individuals like Pacquiao.

My position on this matter has been consistent through the years. My faithful adherence to this standard is one of the reasons I opted to support President Macapagal-Arroyo in the 2004 presidential election when other formidable Rec Jr. true federal opponents were in the race.

—GOV. DAISY AVANCE-FUENTES,
South Cotabato

What Sabah means: Asean brotherhood and fairness

THIS IS A REACTION TO TINA A. SUMBAING news story, "Malaysia still paying Iran minority heirs." (Inquirer, 1/28/07) Admittedly, it raised more questions than answers.

Based on documentary evidence, first, Mohammad Hassim II, in his 1969 treatise "A Historical Account of North Borneo as Claimed by the Sultan of Sulu," expressed the belief that the yearly payment of 5,300 Malaysian Ringgits to the descendants of Sultan Muhammad Jamalul Al Alam—of Sulu, the true owner and legitimate sovereign of Sabah, cannot be considered as modest payment because in the meantime of the sultan, from the 18th to the 21st century, ever agreed to sell his or her real estate property in the British or to the Americans.

Kotoh noted that on Jan. 22, 1878, Sabah owner, Sultan Sultan Abdurrasheed cut Sabah to "the British North Borneo Company for $5,000 a year for 100 years ... [after which] the territories shall be returned to the heirs of the Sultan of Sulu ... It was stipulated that the syndicate shall leave away spots reaching the end of 100 years, January 22, 1978 into the specified date of this owner."

Kotoh further noted that:

1. In 1881, the British Company acquired "sovereign and territorial rights" to Sabah "taken from the Sultan of Brunei." How can a stranger give away land to those not own?

2. In 1888, Sabah became a British "protectorate state by British government was installed.

3. "Effective July 15, 1946 the sovereign rights and assets of the company were transferred to the Crown of England." It suddenly became the youngest British colony and Sabah was officially christened "British North Borneo."

4. When Malaysia acquired its independence from British on Sept. 16, 1963, British North Borneo was handed over to Malaysia and became the State of Sabah, despite "serious disapproval of the Republic of the Philippines," which had claim to Sabah—a territory which rightfully belongs to the heirs of Sultan Sultan Muhammad Jamalul Al Alam, of Sulu like Duterte of the Republic of the Philippines, whose singular denial is the denial of Sabah to those in the spirit of Asean brotherhood, and mutual respect and fair play.

—DANIEL R. ONDIN,
San Vicente Ciudad Angeles,
Villa Gloria, 2009 Angeles City

Praises for DTI-NCR staff

I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND DTI CLAIMANT Cesar Santos, Nene Tambunan and a certain Lynn of the Department of Trade and Industry-National Capital Region (DTI-NCR) for being sincere and wise in their advocacy for consumer protection.

Honestly, I was not too hopeful when I was advised by some friends to file a complaint with the DTI after negotiations with the seller of a defective cell phone that I purchased failed. However, I was proven wrong the first time I called the DTI hotline for inquiry. And when I went to the DTI-NCR's Trabajo office to submit my letter of complaint, I was fully accorded its attention.

It took the next months to complete the information the DTI requested. When I went back, the receiving staff (Lynn) still remembered my case. After I fully supplied the needed information, it took them only one week to schedule a mediation meeting.

And to my pleasant surprise, the mediation man (Santos and his partner Tambunan) gladly did their job...the fine mediation meeting (up for four straight hours without lunch break. A settlement was reached to our mutual satisfaction.

It is really consoling to know that consumer rights have a place in this government agency. To say that I was truly impressed with my DTI experience would be an understatement. I can only hope and pray for more people of their kind in government service.

—BA. ARA CABARIC,
caraa@mail.ibm.edu.ph

Clarification

Yesterday's editorial stated that former President Fidel V. Ramos did not make a statement at the Edsa anniversary rewards, saying rites held last Feb. 22. As of the writing of the editorial, no had not been reported to have made one. No regret stating he was an idiot as the President was...and continues to be.—Ed.

Across the NATION

DENR keeps watch in Bicol areas for bird flu

SORSOGON CITY—THE DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources is keeping an eye on migratory birds in wetlands in the Bicol Region following another report of a migratory bird which apparently died ill when caught by residents in Camarines Norte a week ago.

Nilo Mendoza, regional technical director of DENR's Protected Areas Wildlife Coastal Zone Management Service, confirmed that a dead pipit, a type of water bird, was caught in Daet, Camarines Norte's first-ranked child by a security guard who immediately reported his find to the police.

Mendoza said the bird was immediately buried by personnel of the DENR office in the province.

The DENR official said his office was regularly monitoring at least 10 wetlands in the Bicol Region being frequented by the migratory birds.

Mendoza explained that propor monitoring of the wetlands is important in the campaign against avian influenza as it acts as a sort of buffer zone.

"If these wetlands remain in good condition, the migratory birds would converge on these areas instead of going somewhere else like in the farms where they would be in close contact with humans," he said.

Among those being monitored are the Malinao and Bangalao wetlands in Camarines Norte; Penang, Bikol Paliabagan and Buang-Pandan wetlands, Lake Buhi, Lake Bato and Lake Baao—all in Camarines Sur; Oas, Libog, Bulusan wetlands in Albay; Mabinitonon Island, Pilar-Donsol wetland and Pilar Tigre Island in Sorsogon; Aguho Point and Bangate-tane wetland in Catanduanes; and Chico and Nasi Wildlife sanctuaries in Masbate province.

Mendoza cautioned the public against catching wild birds as they are potential bird flu carriers.

Bobby Lafuente, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Dead, retired teachers keep receiving salaries in ARMM

COTABATO CITY—BARELY A YEAR AFTER A multimillion-peso scam involving the non-remittance of insurance premiums for teachers was discovered, authorities in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) have uncovered yet another irregularity.

This time, it involved the continued payment of salaries to teachers who had long died or have resigned from their services.

Cynthia Unlan-Inquali, ARMM attorney general, said they discovered during the continuing review of documents at the Regional Department of Education (Regional) office here that at least 31 teachers were still being paid despite their reported deaths.

Inquali said other documents indicated that the relatives of the teachers have already claimed death benefits but in the payrolls, "they are still alive."

"These are some of the recent anomalies that we have uncovered," Inquali said.

Twenty-five of those still receiving salaries were found in Lanao del Sur, while has five while Basilan City has one.

Inquali said in just that reason that they are still receiving their pay although they have been dead for a long time already, these workers turn over considerable "ghost teachers."

Inquali said studies from dead teachers, those who have already resigned from the service continue to receive their salaries, at least in payrolls.

"We called the attention of officials concerned and those whose names are still in the payroll as they would in their side," Inquali said.

She said charges will be filed against those found to have deliberately cheated the government.

"The worse penalty here is dismissal from government service," Inquali said in the case of regional education officials.

The ARMM, which covers the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Shariff Kabunsuan, has about 13,079 regular teachers based on records, Inquali Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

Abra cops said to be victims of politicians

BAGUIO CITY—SOME POLICEMEN, who were replaced in 2005 for their alleged ties with warring politicians there, may no longer pose a threat in the election period begins, a non-government organization based in this province said.

Most of them are enforcers have related to Mrs.'s main enemies about being professionals after serving outside Abra, said Pam Sumagui, chair of the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG). She stressed the natural death appears council meeting here on Thursday.

Sumagui said many of these politicians were forced into handling bodyguard duties for these politicians, although they had since been returned to their posts by the Philippine National Police because it could not finance the relocation of their families out of the province.

Sumagui described these policemen as "victims," although the released, edged that some of them received perks from local politicians.

The Commission on Elections has placed Abra under its control during the May 14 elections, and is proposing a reshuffle of police assignments in Abra, according to lawyer Julius Torres. Committee assistant director to be Castillon.

Torres said a Comelec task force would review the case files of the policemen who were replaced when a government ban finding team found that these politicians kept armed bodyguards and maintain (registrations) payroll.

The team also confirmed that many crimes and violent incidents that occurred in the province had political origins, which were tolerated by policemen influenced by politicians.

The team was composed of Commissioner Miguel Coronel of the National Police Commission, the Certified Directors of Napolcom and the Department of the Interior and Local Government, and Director Jesse Sernan, chief of the PNP directorial staff, who formed Task Force Abra in 2005.

Board on their findings, former interior secretary Angelo Reyes replaced the whole Abra police force with police less influence with that completed Task Force Abra, and revoked the authority Alan Cru Tinnao Idiera and 27 reported had over the police.

Sumagui said Task Force Abra is still handling Abra's security and has been successful at keeping the peace.

But she said a permanent solution is still necessary to sustain the efforts.

Sumagui said Comelec had referred CCAGG's petition for intervention in the 1998, 2001 and 2004 elections when killings occurred. *Hanael Cabrera, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Republic of the Philippines
Mindanao Rural Development Project II
Rehabilitation of Farm to Market Road

1. The Government of the Philippines (GOP) has applied a Loan from the World Bank toward the cost of Mindanao Rural Development Project II (MRDP II) and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan together with the GOP counterpart funds, to payments under the contract for the Rehabilitation of Farm to Market Road.
2. The Municipality of Maddig, implementing partner of the Department of Agriculture, now invites sealed bids from eligible contractors for the Rehabilitation of Farm to Market Road. Completion of the works is required by Two Hundred Forty (240) calendar days.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) No. 9184 (2003), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is open to all eligible bidders as defined therein, who pass an eligibility check will be opened. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall undergo to the post-qualification stage in order to fully determine its capabilities and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification process.
4. The procurement requested in this Eligibility Documents shall be submitted as part of the Technical and Financial Proposals as provided in the Instructions to Bidders.
5. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the Bids and Awards Committee and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Mondays to Fridays.
6. A complete set of Bidding Documents in English may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be delivered personally to the bidder or its authorized representative or via courier service on site.
7. Pre-Bid Conference will be held on Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on (Note: 2) March 2007 at the Bids and Awards Committee Office, Brgy. Zamboanga del Sur.
8. Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before March 28, 2007. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in cash, certified manager's or cashier's check, bank guarantee, bid bond or surety bond in the form acceptable to the Bids and Awards Committee. Bid opening shall be on March 28, 2007 at 1:30 PM. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below at 1:30 PM, March 28, 2007.
9. The Municipality of Maddig reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) **PABLITO A. MATIAS**
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee
Office, Brgy. Zamboanga del Sur
Cell # 0917-7777777
http://www.mdo-brgy.gov.ph
email add: bpdbrgy@ymail.com

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
PASIG RIVER REHABILITATION COMMISSION
4/F DENR Main Building, Visayas Ave., Diliman, Quezon City
Telephone Nos. (632) 920-2256 loc. 2000
Telefax Nos. (632) 920-2256 loc. 2102

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
Republic of the Philippines
Supply and Installation of Aids to Navigation for the Pasig River Safety and Security Program

The PRRC, through the General Appropriations Act of 2007, intends to apply the sum of **Twenty Two Million One Hundred Twenty Thousand Seven Hundred Nineteen and 00/100 Pesos (P22,120,719.00)** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for **Supply and Installation of Aids to Navigation for the Pasig River Safety and Security Program (PRRC-ATN-01)**. Delivery of GOODS is required starting **April 1, 2007**. The description of an Eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, viz:

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pre-qualification as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act (RA) 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act", and is open to all Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 5183 as amended, and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section I of the Bidding Documents. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall undergo to the post-qualification stage in order to fully determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post qualification procedures.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from **Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission** and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from **8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.**

Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission
4/F DENR Main Building, Visayas Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from **February 26 to March 2, 2007, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.** of the address below upon submission of Letter of Intent and upon payment of non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents in the amount of **Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00)**. The method of payment shall be made only upon a certification by the Head of the Procuring Entity to the effect that the Bids have been rendered for delivery/acceptance with the terms of the Contract and that the Bidder's claim for payment has been duly filed. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The PRRC-ABAC will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **March 5, 2007, 10:00 A.M.** at the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission, PRRC Conference Room, 3rd DENR-Main Building, Visayas Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City.

Bids shall regrettably be received must be delivered to the address below on or before **March 19, 2007, 10:00 A.M.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form and amount stated in the Bid Data Sheet in any acceptable format, viz: a Bidding Security in the form of a manager's check, cashier's check, or an equivalent irrevocable letter of credit. Bids received shall not be opened.

Bids opened on **March 19, 2007, 10:00 A.M.** at the PRRC Conference Room. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

The PRRC-ABAC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission
4/F DENR Main Building, Visayas Ave., Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. No. (632) 920-2256 loc. 2000
Telefax No. (632) 920-2333; 920-5449

(Sgd.) **ANG, EFREN L. ANGIN, JR.**
PRRC Chairperson

mercury drug
SUKI SABADO
FEB 24 TO MAR 2, 2007

C. Luzon war on red tape praised

CLARE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Sen. Manuel Roxas II lauded Central Luzon officials in their success at eliminating red tape in the issuance of permits and licenses, crediting this highlighted by the vital role of local government units (LGUs) in economic development.

"I hope that your success in the fight against red tape and complex bureaucratic procedures will be emulated by local leaders, department heads and regional offices all over the country," Roxas said in last Tuesday's recognition rites for 34 LGUs that excelled in the streamlining program.

The Central Luzon Investment Coordinating Council, chaired by Mayor Oscar Tibon Zenon III, began the program five years ago in response to President Macapagal-Arroyo's threat to cut red tape to support of local businesses and new investments.

Roxas said the program, co-implemented with the regional Department of Trade and Industry, also succeeded because of the "remarkable foresight and political will" of Aurora who also heads the Central Luzon Growth Corridor Foundation Inc.

DTI Regional Director Hindu Lanzuzon said the program sought to reduce documentary requirements, turnaround time, number of signatories, and cost of licenses for processing of business licenses and permits.

It also aimed to put in place clear-cut, systems and procedures through the Business One-Stop Shop (BOSS). It encouraged LGUs to use computers and go on line for transactions.

The program involved 117 out of 130 cities and towns in the region.

According to Roxas, the simplified procedures gave the LGUs "clear advantage over other competing localities in attracting investors."

"By applying the principles of good governance, the families of economic growth will be translated by LGUs to the Filipino masses with whom they are closest as a partner-gain," the senator added.

A report summarizing the results of

ROXAS

the program said the average turnaround time in permit and license processing had been "fast" and "business-friendly."

Mayors' permits were issued within 15 minutes or up to five days. This used to take two weeks or a month.

Business name certificates, usually given in a month or two, were released at a minimum of an hour or a maximum of two days.

Sales promotion permits were available in an hour, instead of the usual 48 hours.

Environmental clearance certificates, that took a year or two to be issued, were approved after 120 to 150 days.

In Pampanga's City of San Fernando, business permit renewal took an hour and 47 minutes as of Jan. 12. New applications take a day or two hours and two minutes.

The report said LGUs earned significant revenues after they improved the business registration system.

Tarlac City reported a 60.32 percent increase in income in 2006. Baler in Aurora province posted a 15 percent revenue rise and 63 percent increase in registrants in the first quarter of 2006 through the Luzon BOSS. Iba in Zambales reported a 53 percent growth in revenues. Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

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INQUIRER Visayas

'Syokoy' is not about a sea creature

By Ma. Elena Lainez
Reporter

"SYOKOY," A FILM DOCUMENTary on the Petron oil spill in Guimaras produced by young filmmakers in Iloilo, gathers what journalists leave out, like stories on the disaster's effects that are not given much space in the newspapers.

It's not about whose stuff is better, but the power of the film lies in its lingering effect.

It captured stories and the symbols of the daily tasks of people who are trying to recover and find healing for their coastal communities that were devastated by the oil spill.

The film has captured more than sound bites, shots of life and atmosphere.

Syokoy won third place in the recently concluded 10th Cinemo! CCP para sa Pelikula at Video. (It was also named the best regional entry. It was directed by Ray Defiante Gibraltar and written by jobo Isnul Rendora. Oscar Nava was in charge of the cinematography.

The film, which runs for more than an hour, is about the destruction and how people cope with the effects of the oil spill that took place on Aug. 11 last year when the tanker MT Solar 1, which was chartered by Petron and carried more than 2 million liters of bunker oil, sank off Guimaras province, releasing some 200,000 liters of bunker oil into the sea.

The tanker still has at the bottom of the sea with thousands of liters of oil still inside it.

Reporters can't agree on the scale of the area of and long-term damage of the oil spill on the province's rich marine life, fishing ground, tourist area, health and way of life.

Metaphor

It is in rendering that makes Syokoy different from television news. The story was narrated by a rain told by a Guimaran fisherman who saw a syokoy when he was 10 years old in 1958. Student wrote in the synopsis that a syokoy is said to be a malevolent sea creature but it is used in the film as a "metaphor representing victims of the destructive exploitation of the marine ecosystem."

According to the fisherman, there used divers overpowered the tanker, said to be no bigger than a can. The sea creature died guarding the sea patch.

Student said the film "demystifies 'syokoy' from a powerful evil being into a ordinary creature that is ready to defend the integrity and beauty of its natural habitat."

The fisherman's tale was put together with the stories of families hurt by the oil spill, among them the parents of 2-year-old Aldrydyn "Peg" Castillo Jr., who died due to hours of asthma and cough. the fishermen who depended because their fish traps and nets yield no catch, and a woman with a glint of anger in her eyes because she could no longer wash plates, pots and pans in the beach using sea water.

The spoken tale was also juxtaposed

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Business feuds clouding Baguio flower festival

BAGUIO CITY—BUSINESSMEN have staged a protest rally here on Thursday to tell the city government to shut down several trade fairs operating in Burnham Park under the sponsorship of the Baguio Flowers Festival Foundation Inc. (BFFFI) because these represented "unfair trade competition."

The trade fairs, which occupy portions of Burnham Park, are part of this year's staging of the Panagbenga (Baguio Flower Festival), which will be highlighted by a street dancing competition today (Saturday, Feb. 24) and floral float parades on Sunday (Feb. 25).

Atty. Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr. signed on Wednesday 102 administrative orders declaring many of the stalls of the festival's "International Trade Fair and Mindanao Bazaar, be violating the city's sanitation and business laws.

Mounting criticism have also forced the city council to study a withdrawal of the resolution that has granted the ongoing Panagbenga fairsites.

PREPARATIONS for the Baguio flower festival continue amid an ongoing war over businesses that the festival brings. Arriving Baguio mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr. receives 25 trash bins donated by a telecommunications firm on Thursday to replace the city's trash cans. EDWIN BACASNOTA/INQUIRER

Decision

Lawyer Damaso Bangayan, BFFFI chair, said his organization would not contest the city's decision.

This was the second controversy in hit this year's festival. Weeks before the festival opened, local businessmen said a business group linked by the festival organizers fought over control of the city's sidewalks.

Organizers wanted to stop businessmen from extending their emporiums to the sidewalks during a month-long activity called "Session Road in Bloom," when the stretch of the main downtown street was converted into a promenade area.

The businessmen eventually agreed to display their products or services on half of the sidewalks.

About 60 businessmen operating were kicked out in downtown Baguio and the public market said their losses are worse than what they suffered when a fire of mysterious origin hit the summer capital in late 2004 and early 2006.

In a letter transmitted to the mayor's office, the vendors cited the ordinances issued in 1994 and 1997 that prohibit under competition" and the sale of "sidewalk items, such as, but not limited to smuggled items, imitations of brand names, electronic gadgets and paraphernalia, and products in direct competition with those sold by legitimate businesses."

The trade fairs were promoted as venues for new cultural items, but the businessmen said the business ended up selling the same products found in local stores, including shirts with "punk rock" logo.

"Much as we would like to try to make this a non-election issue, we would like to remind you of your promises in your very own words: to protect their rights under the law and the ordinances that you pass and implement," the businessmen said in a letter to the mayor. Vincent Cabreza with a report from EV Esperitu, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Roundup

Aussie girl seized

CAMP OLIVER, Pampanga—A two-year-old daughter of an Australian couple was freed by her kidnappers four days after she was abducted in Lusaka, Zambia, the police said. The suspects have not started negotiations with the girl's parents, Andrew David Rhodes and Gaia Sacramento, or demanded ransom for the child's release, according to Supt. Jerry Sumbad, Lusaka police chief. Sumbad said eight armed men abducted the girl from Oliver Rhodes through the front door of the couple's house at Plot 7340 Justin in Lusaka on Feb. 17 at 10 p.m. and left. 20 in the family watched TV in the living room. Three gunmen entered through the kitchen door and took the girl after one of them said, "Double that for long ang ba ka (Who will only bring the kid to a station)," Sumbad said. An hostage is present in the police custody a custody was countries behind the abduction.

'Lingap Eskwela'

MORE THAN 200,000 students and faculty members in more than 100 public schools were enjoy 24-hour supply of potable and affordable water, due to Manila Water's innovative 'Lingap Eskwela' program. In a statement, Manila Water said through this program, students are assured of a dependable supply of clean and safe drinking water, making their schools more conducive to learning and free from water-borne diseases.

The Department of Education also commends the Lingap Eskwela program as a tool for in providing quality education through safe drinking water.

2 dead in ambush

PIKIT, North Cotabato—At least two people were killed—including a village official—while another was wounded in an ambush on a convoy of provincial Board Member Datilo Mamalapat here on Thursday afternoon. But police immediately ruled out politics behind the attack, saying Mamalapat, a newcomer, was not the target of the suspect.

Rape suspect falls

MANILA (A) Some the Sur—Police have finally arrested one of two suspects in the Nov. 11 rape-slaying of 16-year-old Melissa Benavidez, Chief Insp. Dhevrek Ruiz, Bonifacio police chief, identified the arrested suspect as Emmanuel Lanel Pachuncale, 28. Pachuncale was arrested inside his house here on Wednesday. But Pachuncale's associate, Ken Dan, remains at large. Silvestrado, have suggested the two suspects as the same person Melissa were looking for before the disappearance.

ATMs for rural banks

FOUR of the country's largest rural banks have recently agreed to join the new consortium that operate 47 ATM machines. These are Rizal Bank, Rizal Banco Inc. Bangko Kabayan, Batangas, Valley Bank, Mindanao Bank of Norte, Pampanga. These banks have a combined asset of P3 billion.

Dog meat eating talk of town in Cordillera cafés

BAGUIO CITY—NINE OUT OF 10 Cordillera men are dog eaters. That or not, that statement of a Department of Agriculture official in the Cordillera hardly raised a brow among men here.

Film director Butch Perez was hardly surprised by the dog eater tag.

"That's because 99 percent of the Baguio boys are dirbilers. It (dog meat) is the 'pulutan' par excellence," said Perez, whose movie, "Manahdak," deals with Cordillera culture.

"My pet fowl is dead the statement is not true. I'm meeting more men who are not into dog meat," said Irene Willwarin, manager of the University of the Philippines-Baguio.

"I agree because we have that (dog eating) as part of our culture," said Arthur Allad-iw, editor of the Baguio-based Northern Dispatch.

"I believe that nine out of 10 Baguio boys eat dogs. My sons have an artist who owns a restaurant that serves dog meat and many of us eat there," said sculptor Eigan Romero.

"I don't agree because I don't eat meat," said playwright and copywriter Merlin Marcelino.

Doggone

"Baguio is increasingly becoming cosmopolitan so the culture of eating dogs is no longer prevalent," Antonio Villanueva, a cafe owner-agent, said.

Dog eating is a favorite topic in cafés here especially now that the implementing rules and regulations of the Animal Rights Act are about to be issued.

In the proposed rules, the killing and selling of animals other than cattle, poultry, pigs, goats and rare rabbits, snakes, lizards, deer and crocodiles are not allowed.

The crux of the matter for Cordillerans is the proposed Section 6 of Republic Act 8485 or "The use of animals during rituals of an established religion or sect or by tribal or ethnic customs of indigenous cultural communities."

Isidro Dalang, a Cdi official, said dog eating is part of the region's culture and that "80 percent of Cordillera males eat dogs.

Manager of the University of the Philippines-Baguio

"Majority of the males here may be dog eaters but not 90 percent. Signals of rabies and rabies make dog eating dangerous," said tart Abbot Bennet Laberinto Bontoc.

He said he has stopped eating dogs after witnessing how dogs are taken from Ilocos Laguna and Batangas were slaughtered in a fowl restaurant.

He said rituals involving dog slaughters are no longer observed in Baguio.

"Ummm it culture-culture (There is no culture in-cultural)," he said.

Melchor Alipio, country director of the Network for Animals Philippines, admitted that dog eating is hard to prevent in the Cordillera.

He said one of the things that they can do is to stop the trading of dogs from the lowlands.

But the so-called dog suppliers are getting wiser.

In the past, they would just barrel the dogs in a jeep which made them visible to network officials and police officers.

But now they use vans and the dogs are hidden in multi-level cages, Alipio said. "It has become harder to arrest them," he said.

"We are just wishing that the owners [of dogs] here do not bring dogs with rabies and other skin diseases," he added. Frank Cimatu, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Leftist solons demand: Prosecute Palparan, sack Gonzales, Esperon

By TJ Burgonio

MILITANT LAWMAKERS belonging to the party-list group Bayan Muna yesterday demanded not only the sacking of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales and Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon but also the prosecution of retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan for the unsolved political killings.

Representatives Teodoro Casiño and Satur Ocampo also chastised President Macapagal-Arroyo for "not demonstrating" by issuing an official order to military commanders and their men not to resort to riot sticks in leftist activities.

Three Liberator called for the withdrawal of the government's counterinsurgency program, Oplan Bantay Laya, and a stop to the harassment of progressive party-list groups.

"The bull is in the hands of [lawmaking] alien Retired Brig. Gen. Ipisan Rapporteur Philip Alston announced his initial findings and the Melo Commission submitted its report to Ms Arroyo, Casiño told reporters a meeting in Quezon City.

Mistreating her to act on the recommendations of both," he said, adding:

Apart from ranking Esperon and Retired Security Adviser Gonzales, GMA Mr. Arroyo should come out with a general order for all the Armed Forces men to confirm that they should not be part of, or at the least tolerate, any extrajudicial killing."

'Can't stay neutral'

At the same hearing, ex-constitutional Ocampo said: "To stop the political killings, the government should sack Esperon and Palparan, ex-Gonzales, and focus on cleaning up its ranks to avoid more paramilitary killings.

"At this point, President Macapagal-Arroyo can't just be silent. If she's the elder-sister's the killers or with the victims. She has no choice; she can't stay neutral."

Casiño proposed that Malacañang file criminal complaints against those responsible for the killings in their areas of operations.

"They say Palparan is past because he's retired. But there are many unknown and generals in the field whose human rights violations are happening. The government should act decisively to check on these officers," he said.

Casiño said the international community that [it] is really serious about prosecuting [the perpetrators] and putting a stop to the killings."

Casiño said that despite his appointment, Palparan should be prosecuted, especially in view of the findings of the investigating committees headed by former Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo.

"The Melo Report was correct in pointing out that in the cases it studied, it was really the military which was responsible for the extrajudicial killings. There's no other conclusion that you can draw. The Melo Commission merely confirmed what we've been saying. And it vindicates our human rights groups and victims," Casiño said.

Alston plugged gaps

Casiño admitted that he and his colleagues were not satisfied with Philip Alston's findings. He said Alston's report "glossed over" the military's role as well as the President of accountability.

He said it was a good thing that Alston's report plugged the gaps. "Alston did even more in saying that there were carried out by State elements. He concluded that [the government's counterinsurgency programs and moves to demonize the progressive groups had a lot to do with them."

Trit, Casiño said, was "the turning link" in the Melo Report.

"It implicates the President; it absolves the higher-ups. They made it look like it's still Palparan's fault. That is not the case," he said.

Casiño also called on the government to stop the counterinsurgency programs, "which, in fact, should be terminated."

"The program is] obviously defective. It provides for the environment where the killings are happening. It should be withdrawn immediately," he said of Oplan Bantay Laya.

'President may be liable under int'l law'

FLOWERS Six women on the street in front of antiriot police men guarding the Ed in Shrine from militant demonstrators Friday. INQUIRER

Related page A-2

out the findings, to seek the truth and take decisive action to stop these killings.

"The President calls on the country leaders to show calm and restraint as we move into the volatile campaign season."

Bunye also said he was "disappointed" that the Melo Report itself was incomplete, but he was wary of unless efforts to get to the bottom of things, but mainly due to the lack of cooperation of a number of victims and their families."

Int'l responsibility

According to the Melo Report, an illegal act that violates human rights and is initially not directly imputable to a state—for example, because it is the act of a lone person or because the person responsible has not been identified—can lead to international responsibility of the State, not because of the act itself, but because of the lack of due diligence to prevent the violation or to respond to it."

The report highlighted the crucial role to be played by the President in stopping the killings, which were largely blamed by the commission on the military, particularly retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, whose militants people had dubbed the "butcher" of Mindanao [Ed Note].

"If extrajudicial executions are to be stopped, the political will to do what is right however great the cost must pervade all levels of government so that our beloved country can move toward the greater ideals of democracy and justice, it must start with the President who must pursue the prevention and prosecution of extrajudicial killings with urgency and fervor," the report said.

It also urged her to intervene "in the strongest possible manner" for condemnation of the killings and her "determination and firm resolve to stop the same."

"The President and all the departments of the government should make clear to all members of the police and military forces that unprovoked executions will not be countenanced under any circumstances," it added.

But the commission also said it was not sure if some of the crimes committed by insurgents against soldiers—"indiscriminate, justified, and unjustifiable, in fact, is the fervor with which the State, through the military, feels the need to avenge these heinous acts"—pitched in the defense of the country. However, this should not be at the cost of the freedoms we are protecting in the first place."

No investigations

The Melo Commission also took to task both the military and police for their lackadaisical investigation of Palparan.

The report quoted Philippine National Police Deputy Director General Avelino Razon Jr., head of Task Force Usig, as saying that Palparan had neither been summoned nor even invited for questioning by the panel because "we want to look into the political killings."

Razon said the task force could not explain the reason for the killings, and refused to attribute it to Mr. Arroyo's declaration of an all-out war against communist insurgents.

But Razon said he would have preferred that Palparan explain why there was no apparent increase in the killings in areas where he was assigned.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jnr. will admitted that no formal investigation had been conducted because no formal complaints were filed, the report said.

Esperon, who served in the AFP for 33 years before his retirement last Sept. 11, was invited by the Melo Commission to shed light on the heightened number of killings of media workers and urged activists in the news industry to be more circumspect.

There were included General Talino Hagibedon 2000 to September 2006), Eastern Visayas (February 2005 to August 2006), and Mindoro (May 2001 to April 2005). (More on Page A19.)

When asked by the commission how he earned the tag of "butcher," Palparan said it was part of the "propaganda war" of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army, according to the report.

'Shoot them'

The report said that in the course of his testimony before the commission, Palparan confirmed having made the following statements:

- "My order is my soldiers is that, 'Kung di kayo barilin, di kayo barilin' [if they are armed while in the house or yard, shoot them. It will not be you but if civilians are killed in the process. We are sorry if you are killed in the crossfire."
- "There would be some collateral damage, but it will be short and tolerable. The enemy would blow it up as a monster violation of human rights. But to me, it would just be necessary collaterals."
- "Sorry na lang kung may masawi sa amin. The goal is to rid them and local officials must 'wash' another brought about by the military's anti-insurgency campaign."

"They cannot be stopped completely. The killings, I would say are necessary incidents in a conflict because they [the rebels] see conduct. It's not necessary that the military alone should be blamed."

From the report of Palparan's statements, it appeared the possibility that some of his soldiers may have been responsible for the killings although they were not directed by their commanders," the report said.

Palparan: We do not kill, only scare them

By Christine O. Avendaño

JOVITO PALPARAN THREE the report of the Melo Commission used the initial findings of United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston on the extrajudicial killings are flawed because both purportedly parrots of the "propaganda" of the "enemy of the state."

Indeed, Palparan said yesterday, the outcomes of the Melo and Alston reports "only showed just how effective the propaganda of the Left was. "But I don't mind their gripes/ things are/ Alston so/ because that's how it really is in fighting/ don't misrepresent/ it's a propaganda war," he said.

Palparan said he held reporters in a phone patch interview.

Both the Melo Commission and Alston's team held the military as responsible for the killings. But the Melo Report named Palparan as the prime suspect in the murders.

The two only Palparan as exiled the Melo Commission, saying at least he's fortunately he had made for the months. (See story on Page 1.)

"But most of my statements were misrepresented, taken out of context, is intentionally misconstrued," he said.

He cited as example a statement he had made to civilian support which "supporting" the communist New People's Army to starve Reju—after he had issued orders to shoot NPA rebels in the house or yard if they were actually there people were there, and then it would be too bad if civilians were killed in the process.

Scare tactics

"I expected that my words/ translated/ the NPA in the media/ misunderstood, as it was psychological warfare. I intended the message to reach the rebels," Palparan said, adding:

"The message is that the people have now stopped supporting the NPA, and the NPA cannot force the people to double crossed."

"Now the Melo commission misrepresented that, saying that if I had said those things, then I had ordered those civilians killed/ it's ridiculous, isn't it?"

Palparan said what he had really intended was to scare the people otherwise MPs are purported to be acting against the military.

Asked why he had to resort to scare tactics or civilians, he said in Filipino: "Well, those people really have to be scared because of the wrong actions. That's why I said the state has the coercive power—because the bad people, you have to scare them before they do bad things."

"That's the state planning to attack us, to kill us. They're being used by the NPA... to instead of killing them, we want them so they don't support the NPA."

Palparan also said the commission's findings were not definite and mainly "tentative."

"They have not done them job, actually," he said. "It's hope for those members of the commission to come out with definite findings so that people who are responsible can be held accountable and those who are not involved and implicated will be cleared."

'Shallow' probe

He added: "That's what we expect of the Melo Commission, [it should] also make efforts/ very trustworthy why/ They didn't do their work, but they were led on me/ I.

As for Alston's initial findings, Palparan said he could not blame the UN official who had accepted the "shallow" reports of military operations.

And even if the civilians and military establishments had limited stakes in the extrajudicial killings, Palparan said there is no in-depth study and analysis of the situation," Palparan said.

He said that if the Melo Commission and the military groups did not have ties with them, what more Alston who, he noted, was "also involving mostly the propaganda of the enemy?"

Condemning on Alston's claim that the military did not do enough in investigating the killings, Palparan said this was because there was little information for the military to work on.

He also said he was ready to have any investigation again.

Al warns RP: Act now before violence rules May elections

From page A-1

said, a lack of accountability remained a critical challenge because despite the hundreds of killings "primarily of legal leftist activists" over the past six years, no convictions had been made.

Amnesty International said that in keeping with the Latin season, all political parties and civil society groups should reflect on the lives lost and resolve to stop the killings.

"Those responsible for or complicit in the killings, particularly military elements identified by the Melo Commission and [Alston], must fully support [the report] and [its] recommendations with investigators," it said.

Local human rights group Karapatan has blamed security forces for most of the more than 800 killed, including more than 100 leftist activists, since President Macapagal-Arroyo took power in 2001.

The President has announced the point action plan, including the establishment of special courts to speed along the trials of suspected perpetrators, to address the issues.

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CGFNS to '06 nurses: Forget appeal, take test

Related page A-2

day on its website and attributed to its chief executive officer Barbara L. Nichols, gave emphasis to the requirement of US immigration law.

It was issued after meeting groups and the Philippine Regulation Commission (PRC) formed a task force that would travel to the United States to appeal the

In the statement, Nichols said the CGFNS recognized that the June 2006 passers who had been sworn in as registered nurses were "validly licensed in the Philippines."

But it is US immigration law that requires the CGFNS to make "a determination as part of the VisaScreen process about several] elements of the visa applicant's education, training, license, and experience—including their comparability to US norms," she said.

After reviewing the documents submitted by the applicant, Nichols continued, the CGFNS will issue a certificate to individuals who "pass[ed] this exam," the added.

Immigration process

Nichols further said: "The VisaScreen certificate program is an immigration process—not a licensure process—that must be satisfied to obtain an occupational visa to work in the United States."

She said that the VisaScreen certification program was "a freely available immigration processing program for various foreign health professionals" seeking employment in the United States, and that CGFNS was "designated by US immigration law to administer that program."

Nichols reiterated that the June 2006 passers could "never meet" that and qualify for a VisaScreen certificate by "taking the equivalent of Tests I and II on a future Philippine nursing exam."

Asked to comment, Dr. Bienvenido Bolinawan, executive director for the PRC Parañaque Integrated Colleges, said he would be in a better position to say that the CGFNS statement "should put all questions to rest."

She added: "Since 2006 nurses have the option to retake Tests I and II if they want to get a score. This is what we were worried about. Unfortunately only the 2006 people who stood by us are the ones coming.

"We wanted what was best for our nurses. We hope that the PRC, the PNA (Philippine Nurses Association), and the June 2006 nurses will open their eyes and not waste precious time and money but be productive."

SPORTS

SMB's Dorian Pena (R) jockeys for position with Ginebra's Rudy Hadjirdin during a late night...At the back is Dondon Hontiveros

Gin Kings close out Beermen for crown

By Manny B. Castillo

THERE HAVE BEEN SOME CHANGES IN the team's name over the years. And there are more players with foreign-sounding names this time.

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Ex-Pasay vice mayor shows up with TRO

But no takeover takes place at City Hall; vows to return Monday

PANALIGAN

By Julie M. Aurelio

HE CAME, HE SAW—AND HE went home.

Clutching a temporary restraining order on the dismissal against him, dismissed Pasay City Vice Mayor Antonino Calixto was yesterday prevented from assuming his former post at the City Hall on the orders of the incumbent mayor.

But instead of pushing it, the former vice mayor took a passive stance and said he would be back on Monday to lead the flag-raising ceremonies.

Calixto spent kneeling at the doors of the City Hall at around 4 p.m. yesterday only to be met by chief of police Chief Supt. Marlen Alarkis, who said he was under orders not to allow Calixto inside the building. Calixto brought with him copies of the TRO issued by the Court of Appeals Tenth Division, which instructed the Office of the Ombudsman and the government of Interim and Local Government "to cease and desist from implementing the Jan. 12 decision" ordering Calixto's dismissal.

The former mayor said he was there to assume the post of acting mayor because of the TRO.

Calixto, along with dismissed Pasay City mayor Peewee Trinidad and 10 councilors, were placed under preventive suspension in September 2006 for an illegally awarded garbage collection and disposal contract worth more than P400 million.

The Ombudsman decision on Jan. 12 ordered Trinidad and Calixto's dismissal from office.

On Jan. 17, the former vice mayor filed a motion for reconsideration on his dismissal. The Court of Appeals issued the said

BY MARY ICE

CALIXTO

Thank you very, very much, Mr. Alston

PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP) Chief Oscar Calderon said his agency would provide security to any individual who could give information and evidence against "fanning" financiers and protectors.

If I were that individual, I would not trust Calderon with the information and evidence against financiers and protectors of the illegal numbers game.

I have given the PNP chief information in this column about a subsidiary who allegedly remitted P200,000 daily from gaming lords. I got the report from a Camp Crame insider.

Calderon hasn't ordered any investigation into the allegation.

The best Calderon could have done was to try to uncover the subsidiary's identity, but he hasn't.

* * *

Michael Christian U. Rho, general manager of the government-owned Daily Tribune Philippines, was ordered suspended by the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) effective Jan. 8, 2007.

The suspension was good for 90 days pending a formal investigation into an alleged $1.8 million "irregular" contract between DPP and an advertising agency.

Rho allegedly continues to hold office. Why?

* * *

Heard from the grapevine: National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Director Nestor Mantaring is about to be replaced by another NBI man who joined the bureau only recently.

The newcomer who would replace Mantaring is reportedly a Mantaringling favorite.

The palace is allegedly not satisfied with Mantaring's performance. Some insiders claim there are "irregularities" inside the premier law enforcement agency under Mantaring.

Mantaring replaced the late director of the bureau, Reynaldo Wycoco.

A very young and active Department of Justice special prosecutor was one of those considered as Wycoco's replacement. He is a son of a retired NBI official who did very well while he was in the service.

The prosecutor, who was recommended by former President Estrada, was eventually dropped from the short list because of his youth.

* * *

I went to the wake of Philippine Ambassador to Israel Antonio Modena, my former colleague at the defunct Times Journal in 1975-76.

The wake turned into a session of Modena's former colleagues in the journalism profession. They had very fond memories of Tony, some of them rebuilt anecdotes, which they shared with the embassy during the necessary logistical rites held Thursday.

From stories told about him, Modena was a journalist first and diplomat second.

He was known for championing the cause of overseas Filipino contract workers in Israel that diagnosed the best governments.

I looked at the names of people and institutions that sent flowers—one of them was the Embassy of Israel. Another was former President Estrada.

But I didn't see any wreath from President Macapagal-Arroyo, which surprised me since Modena was an ambassador until the time of his death. However, I heard Ms Arroyo dropped by for a brief visit.

Modena's body will be cremated today.

* * *

Lobton and journalism is the military's unofficial order of battle here! United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston is dumb for getting a "reprieve."

An "order of battle" or OB is a list of persons considered as enemies of the state by the military.

Alston denounced some senators in the military for the unexplained killings of lobton and journalists. Many of the victims were in the military OB.

Thank you very, very much, Mr. Alston!

Reconsider petition on judge hearing case, Leviste asks

By DJ Yap

FORMER MAHARAJAH GOVERNOR Jose Antonio Leviste has asked the court to reconsider its order junking the petition to have the Makati judge inhibit himself from handling the murder case against him.

Leviste is facing charges for the killing at his long-time aide, Rafael de los Reyes.

The former governor said Judge Elmo Alameda of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 150 should inhibit himself from hearing the case because Leviste had a "strong belief" that the judge was biased.

In his motion for reconsideration dated Feb. 21, Leviste said "there are circumstances attendant in the present case that led the accused to reasonably believe, or at least entertain the thought, that the Honorable Presiding Judge is no longer impartial."

Leviste said he was not trying to impugn Alameda's integrity or question the propriety of the judge's actions. He only wanted to reassure his lawyers back to

Regional trial court orders closure of casino in Binangonan

MUTYA NG MAYDTAS 2007
Mayotas Mayor Toby Tanjuco (right) and Vice Mayor PJ Junior (left) with the newly crowned Mutya ng Mayotas 2007, Diana Jane Nicolas of Barangay San Roque (center), Abegail Hilario (1st runner-up), Katherine Ivosan (2nd runner-up), Michelle Gerasa (3rd runner-up) and Joey Ann Bonifacio (2nd runner-up).

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

ARMED WITH A COURT ORDER, the Binangonan municipal government yesterday closed down a 2-year-old casino inside a resort in Barangay San Isidro.

The local government had earlier filed charges against the casino operator for operating without the proper permits from the Municipal Hall and not paying local taxes, in apparent response to calls for a shutdown from Church leaders and other groups in the province.

In an order on Thursday, a copy of which was given to the inquirer by Rizal Gov. Casimiro Ynares, the Binangonan RTC Branch 67 granted a request of the local government for a cease and desist order to stop the owners and employees from continuing to operate the facility.

Ynares said his leaders, Binangonan Mayor Cesar Ynares, personally went to the resort yesterday afternoon as the court decided toward the order.

"We find that the plaintiff's sentiment: operation of its casino runs the permits and the non-payment of taxes will work irreparable damage to the plaintiff unless urgently restrained," the court said in its order.

The casino operators consequently said it was exempted from local permits and fees, saying it was located within an economic zone in the town.

But in a statement, the town mayor said they had verified with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority that only the resort and the hotel "and not the casino" were exempted from local fees and permits.

The preliminary investigation of the case against the casino operators has been rescheduled to March 2. The temporary restraining order against casino operations would be enforced within 20 days.

The casino has not only become the main attraction of the fast-fast resort built in the resort town about ten years ago, but it has also become the subject of a stiff opposition by leaders of the Diocese of Antipolo.

The governor was quick to brush off insinuations that the move against the casino was politically motivated, considering the stand of Church leaders on the issue.

Ynares, a rookie-mist, is running unopposed for in the coming polls, while his brother Cesar is winding up his third term as town mayor.

Running in Cesar's place is their youngest brother Cecilio, the governor added.

'Opposition . . .

From page A10

Plaza Miranda?" he said.

Yesterday's symposium was the first in a series of monthly "brunch" forums at a "vehicle for the exchange of ideas and sometimes of viciousness."

It was organized by the Quijano de Manila Foundation Inc. (QMFI) establishment last month by a group of journalists in honor of the late National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin. Quijano de Manila was the name Joaquin used in a journalist.

Ninoy recalled the bombing of the Liberal Party proclamation rally in Plaza Miranda on Aug. 21, 1971. Then running for city councilor, Ninoy could not believe he escaped unscathed while many were injured.

A graduate of architecture at the University of Santo Tomas, Ninoy said he did not expect to be mayor of Manila.

"A lot of people encouraged me from entering politics because it was 'only for the rich' and that you can't win if you had no money," he said.

He said ideals were not enough to win an election. "Hindi ito sumasapat eto sa ideals. Meron ding realities ang pagkatao, tulad ng pagkakaroon ng lakas na. Being popular was not enough, and being idealistic may be the best motivation but you still have to guard your votes," he said.

In the ensuing May elections, he said young, bright, committed Filipinos had to get into politics lest the "brutal and failed" ones succeeded. The three-time mayor of the country's capital said "hope is in politics."

The QMFI is led by Ambassador Antonio Cabangon Chua, who owns Philippine Graphic magazine and other media outfits.

Apart from the monthly forums, the QMFI will hold lectures and annual awards for journalists, and tie up with journalism schools for scholarships.

British officials fear Bush will attack Iran

IRAN IRAN-MAN A policeman walks past a mural on the wall of the former US embassy in Tehran Feb. 21. REUTERS

LONDON—SENIOR BRITISH government officials fear that US President George W. Bush will attack Iran before his final term in office ends in a little less than two years' time, The Times reported on Friday.

They fear that Bush will seek to "settle the Iranian question through military means," the daily reported, quoting unidentified senior British government sources.

"It's I think I will not seem extreme to remembered for his successor," one of the sources told The Times.

According to The Guardian daily, meanwhile, much of the intelligence provided by American agencies about Iran's nuclear facilities to UN inspectors has turned out to be unfounded.

Citing unnamed diplomatic sources in Vienna, the base for the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), most of the dossier about supposedly secret weapons sites have proved dead ends.

"Most of it has turned out to be inaccurate," an unidentified diplomat at the IAEA told the Guardian. knowledge of the agency's investigations told The Guardian.

"They gave us a paper with a list of sites. [The inspectors] did some follow-up, they went to some military sites, but there was no sign of

dreamed nuclear] activities." Now [the inspectors] don't go to blindly. Only if it passes a credibility test." The report's follow comments made on Thursday by United Prime Minister Tony Blair who claimed there a "no planning" under way for an attack on Iran, and added that he knew of "nobody" in Washington who was planning an invasion officer.

"You can't absolutely predict every act of circumstances that comes about but sitting here now talking to you, I can tell you Iran is not Iraq," Blair told BBC Radio.

"There is, as far as I know, no planning going on to make an attack on Iran and people are pursuing a diplomatic and political solution for a good reason—there is also no reason [to] anyone can't think of as viable and sensible." Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett also said on Thursday that Britain remained committed to a negotiated solution and would "stay entirely with its international partners to find a way to move forward from" requiring the country to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran has failed to comply with a United Nations Security Council demand to halt uranium enrichment, the UN nuclear watchdog said Thursday, prompting calls around the world for new sanctions.

Iran's nuke defiance risks new sanctions

VIENNA—IRAN HAS FAILED TO comply with a UN Security Council demand to halt uranium enrichment, the UN nuclear watchdog said Thursday, prompting calls around the world for new sanctions.

The United States, which accuses Iran of seeking nuclear weapons, said international powers want to head Iran back before the Security Council.

France called for a new sanctions resolution while Italian Security Council permanent member Britain called for "further Security Council measures, which will lead to the further isolation of Iran internationally." But Tehran insisted that it would not halt its nuclear work.

"Iran has not suspended its enrichment related activities," the International Atomic Energy Agency said in a report for the IAEA 35-nation board of governors and the Security Council.

The Security Council passed a resolution on Dec. 23 imposing limited sanctions on Iran and demanding it freeze enrichment, which makes fuel for civilian reactors but can also produce more bomb material.

The second gave IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei 60 days to report on whether Iran had complied. The IAEA board reconvened on March 6.

ElBaradei's report said Iran had failed to suspend its work. Iran has failed to classify over a 10-page document outlining the plans for making the core of nuclear bombs.

A senior US official said the lack of "progress in the outstanding issues is the most important thing in this report." The IAEA also demanded that Iran allow unrestricting interview at a huge, heavily bunkered underground enrichment site in Natanz, it's central Iran.

The United States and its allies are now expected to urge new UN Security Council action against Iran.

"We are disappointed that Iran has not complied with [UN] resolution 1737," said White House national security spokesperson Gordon Johndroe. AFP

Malaysia says it won't restrict foreign workers

KUALA LUMPUR—MALAYSIA will not restrict freedom of movement for foreign workers, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was quoted as saying Friday.

Abdullah said a controversial bill governing the country's 2.6 million foreign workers needed careful study, the New Straits Times reported.

"If it is going to be beneficial to all parties, including the workers, then there is nothing wrong to its phrasing it," Abdullah told Malaysian journalists during a visit to Jakarta, the newspaper said.

"But if the provision is to lock them up, it will not be acceptable," he said.

Abdullah's comments came as opposition moved to propose to control the movement of foreign workers, mostly construction laborers and plantation workers, to curb rising crime rate.

Home Affairs Minister Mohamad Radzi Sheikh Ahmad said Sunday Malaysia would soon introduce a bill proposing that employers "provide proper accommodation at the workplace, where it is properly monitored, where they have options to ensure that the workers do not go astray." He said the bill, which could be approved by cabinet next month, would recommend that workers register with their employers if they ordered to go out during breaks or days off.

Malaysia's police chief had earlier reportedly suggested confining foreigners to their work premises and putting them under 24-hour surveillance to prevent crime.

Higher groups condemned the proposals and the Star newspaper quoted Abdullah as saying workers' basic rights should not be violated.

"If the employers can provide living quarters that are close to their projects and regulate their movements and out of those areas, then I do not see why this cannot be done," Abdullah said.

"However, there should not be any interference by the police in organizing the workers' movements so that will go against their basic rights." Prime chief Musa Hassan has said crimes committed by overseas workers escalated to about 5,000 cases last year—about two percent of 232,400 cases recorded.

Official statistics have shown that criminal incidents overall increased 45.1 percent in the three years since 2005. AFP

TURMOIL IN GREEK UNIVERSITIES

Greek police fight with demonstrators during a student protest in Athens Feb. 22. Greek university students have been protesting for several months against a government plan to reform the academic and fiscal management of public universities in a bid to raise standards and meet the bar of Greek graduates abroad. AFP

Cardinal orders Australian priests: Keep funeral Masses short

CANBERRA—KEEP IT SHORT, and don't mention sex or drunkenness—those are the new rules for eulogies at funeral Masses in Australia's Catholic church.

An increase in the number of long-winded eulogies by friends or family members at funeral services, and in cases the burial of mass, prompted Australia's most senior Catholic, Cardinal George Pell, to impose a five-minute deadline on eulogies and down some areas of a pre-mar go away." He said the bill, which could be approved by cabinet next month, would recommend that workers register with their employers if they ordered to go out during breaks or days off.

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The move is designed to cut back on the number of long-winded eulogies by friends or family members at funeral services, and in cases the burial of mass, prompted Australia's most senior Catholic, Cardinal George Pell, to impose a five-minute deadline on eulogies and down some areas of a pre-

ing process, romantic conquests etc.) or abuse the Church [or achieving its moral credentials] have been made at funeral masses," Pell's new guidelines say.

He said the statements often embarrassed the priest, the family and the congregation and became the focus of the service.

The Catholic church in Ireland and most of the United States has lay people from giving eulogies at

The "words of remembrance" should last no more than three to five minutes, or one typed page, and should focus on a person's human qualities and faith," the guidelines say.

"The reflection should be prepared beforehand, and ideally be reviewed with the priest or presiding minister beforehand, to avoid undue length or embarrassing remarks," the guidelines say.

The new guidelines say anecdotes, poems or songs might be better kept for services at the cemetery or crematorium, or for a vigil prayer service the night before a funeral.

The Catholic church in Australia's biggest, with about five million followers, followed closely by the Anglican church with just over four million.

Reuters

Circumcision's anti-AIDS effect greater than first thought

THAMPOIL, 48, grimaces in pain as a surgeon for anti-AIDS centers in Thailand Feb. 17. REUTERS

CIRCUMCISION MAY PROvide even more protection against AIDS than men realized when two clinical trials in Africa were stopped two months ago because the results were so clear, according to studies being published Friday.

The studies, in Kenya and Uganda, were stopped early by the National Institutes of Health, which was paying for them, because it was apparent that circumcision reduced a man's risk of contracting AIDS from heterosexual sex by about half. It would have been unethical to continue without offering circumcision to all 8,000 men in the trials, federal health officials said.

That decision, announced on Dec. 13, made headlines around the world and led the two largest funds for fighting AIDS to say they would consider paying for circumcisions in high-risk countries. But the final data from the trials, to be published Friday in the British medical journal The Lancet, suggests that circumcision reduces a man's risk by as much as 60 percent.

The December announcement described only the follow-up on the men as originally divided into two groups; those who agreed to be circumcised and those who opposed it. So far, that name in the first group never went to the circumcision clinic, and some in the second had private circumcisions before the study ended.

In evaluating the data, ending a five-year labour, 38% more was misdiagnosed during the visit and combining the results of three trials—those in Uganda and Kenya as well as one in South Africa that was stopped in 2003—researchers found a protective rate of about 65 percent. NYT

Roh decides to leave his ruling party

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT ROH MOO-HYUN on Friday dismissed President Roh Moo-hyun's decision to leave his ruling Uri Party in a "political circus." Analysts said Roh's decision announced late Thursday would ease Roh's efforts to merge with allies and create a new entity ahead of the December presidential election.

Critics had said his personal unpopularity was undermining support for the ruling party.

But there were fears the move would confirm Roh's "lame duck" status in his final year in office, amid a variety of challenges such as the economic slowdown and North Korea's nuclear program.

Roh announced his plan during a dinner with leaders of Uri, which has an approval rating of little more than 10 percent compared to 20 percent for the conservative Grand National Party (GNP).

"I have long burdened about leaving Uri [the] Party amid the heated debate about it within the party. I finally decided to leave in order to help eliminate intra-party conflict," he was quoted by his spokesperson as saying.

Prime Minister Han Myung-Sook offered to resign at the same dinner. South Korea's five female prime ministers repeatedly intends to run for presidency and is set to represent Uri and its allies.

Roh has repeatedly said he might quit Uri, to push through constitutional reform so as a politi-

ROH (right) with Prime Minister Han Myung-Sook Feb. 22. AFP

cal neutral and allow it to rebuild support ahead of the presidential poll.

Roh's tenure as will from the current five-year, single-term presidency in a four-year, two-term system to promote political stability and policy consistency, even though he himself cannot benefit.

His action sparked GNP condemnation.

"This is nothing more than a political circus aimed at benefiting the ruling party struggling with low popularity," a spokesperson said. "The president should either withdraw the decision or form a new, politically neutral cabinet." Roh became the fourth incumbent president to break with the ruling party since his predecessors Roh Tae-Woo, Kim Young-Sam and Kim Dae-Jung.

"President Roh is no exception that his membership was unbalanced a burden on the party," said political science professor Kim Seong-Ho of Kyunghee University. AFP

Deal reached to bury Nicole Smith in Bahamas

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.—FORMER Playboy centerfold Anna Nicole Smith will be buried in the Bahamas next to her dead son after an agreement was reached to end a two-week legal feud over her corpse, lawyers said on Thursday. (See related story on Saturday Special Page B11)

Choking back tears, Broward Circuit Judge Larry Seidlin had earlier ordered Smith's body—rapidly decomposing after her unexplained death at age 39 in a Florida hotel casino on Feb. 8—into the custody of a court-appointed guardian of her 5-month-old baby daughter Dannielynn Hope Marshall Stern.

"I'm very grateful that Anna Nicole's wishes are going to be carried out," said Smith's long-time lawyer and companion, Howard K. Stern, who wanted to have her buried next to her son Daniel in the Bahamas, where he died five months ago.

Speaking to reporters outside the Fort Lauderdale courthouse where Stern, Smith's former boyfriend Larry Birkhead and Smith's mother, Virgie Arthur, have spent six days fighting over the corpse, lawyers for the factions said they could not give any details about the funeral but hoped it would be private.

The decision appeared to mean the legal battle over Smith—famous in life for her beautiful bum—was all but over even though Arthur's attorney indicated she might yet appeal.

Broward County Medical Examiner Joshua Perper said an appeal could delay release of the body.

The sudden death of the former topless dancer and billionaire's widow and child bride over her body have brought swarms of television crews and tabloid journalists to the Broward County courthouse in Fort Lauderdale.

Relishing the limelight, Seidlin presided over the proceedings as if they were an audition for a TV show, lecturing shouting lawyers, taking over their questioning of witnesses and firing off jokes and off-the-cuff remarks.

But the saga is about more than just 15 minutes of fame or the location of a tombstone—Smith's estate could be worth a fortune one day if a domestic court battle to inherit the wealth of her late husband, Texas oil tycoon J. Howard Marshall, prevails.

And so much of the focus has been on who fathered Dannielynn—for legal more of late.

Rubbished says he is her father and has launched a paternity suit in California, while Stern is listed on Dannielynn's birth certificate as the child's father.

A hearing was scheduled for a Fort Lauderdale family court on Friday, just down the hall from Seidlin's courtroom, where lawyers for Birkhead said they would demand DNA tests on Dannielynn.

Seidlin spent the last day of its hearings asking questions about those vying for the remains: did Smith's mother, Arthur, provide strong support for her daughter?; was Stern "an enabler" who aided and abetted her prescription drug problem?

"Good guy, bad guy, hero, villain?" Seidlin mused, speculating about Smith's abuse of prescription drugs and wondering whether she would have been better able to handle fame if she had had a stronger support network.

"This beautiful woman gets thrown into the spotlight. But unfortunately ... she's not prepared for the hurricane."

Reuters

Smith in 2004.

PHOTO: Circa May 20, 2006 shows rebels from the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) in Tina, a small village located 70 km west of el-Fasher, capital of Northern Darfur.

4 years on, world still cannot end Darfur disaster

KHARTOUM—FOUR YEARS AFTER THE conflict in Darfur erupted, violence and hunger continue to ravage the western Sudanese region as the international community fails to impose its will on Khartoum.

"Four years is far too much ... The fact that this goes on is a disgrace," said UN peacekeeping chief Jean-Marie Guehenno during a recent visit to Khartoum with his African Union (AU) counterpart, Salim Ahmed Salim.

The human cost of what some observers describe as the first genocide of the 21st century has been huge. At least 200,000 people have been killed, more than two million displaced and violence has spread to neighboring countries.

The United Nations and other aid agencies are running the world's largest relief operation in Darfur, with a budget of $1 billion and around 13,000 workers operating in an increasingly dangerous environment.

More experts say the war officially started on Feb. 26, 2003 when rebels attacked a garrison in North Darfur. Government forces backed by Janjaweed militia responded with a fierce scorched-earth campaign.

Violence has never ebbed since. As ill-equipped, semi-trained contingents of AU observers has failed to make an impact in more than two years and a peace deal signed last May in Abuja has never really been implemented.

At a November meeting in Addis Ababa, the United Nations decided to work with the AU on two main points: reviving the political process and ditching Khartoum's stop for a UN peacekeeping deployment.

Washington has described the Khartoum-sponsored repression in Darfur as genocide and threatened sanctions. Hollywood stars such as George Clooney are involved and an international divestment campaign is gaining momentum.

The International Criminal Court is also expected to further turn up the heat on President Omar al-Bashir's regime next week by issuing arrest warrants against some of its senior members for crimes against humanity.

But Bashir, who seized power in a 1989 coup, has consistently resisted pressure, and has warned the world that Darfur would become a graveyard for all Western troops who ventured there.

At the French African summit in Cannes earlier this month, he gave no indication he would comply with international demands and support a UN troop presence to support the embattled African contingent.

"It is clear that the African Union troops have the peacekeeping role," he said. "The United Nations is there to provide logistical, financial and technical support so that the African Union can do its work." The UN wants to dispatch more than 1,500 peacekeepers to Darfur, paving the way for a 23,000-strong "hybrid" force of AU and UN troops.

The May 2006 Abuja peace deal was signed under intense international pressure by the Sudanese government but with only one rebel faction. There are now at least 30 rebel groups and splinters.

AFP

Government Warning: Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Chanco

Iraq rebs' new weapon: Chlorine bomb

Bill Blunt Sergeant of Sen Luis Obispo, Calif., hugs the flag at the graveside services for her son Army Staff Sgt. Carl L. Seigert, Thursday, Feb. 22, in Picayune, Miss. Seigert died on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, in Iraq. AP

BAGHDAD, IRAQ—INSURGENTS ARE LIKELY TO continue combining car bombs with chlorine gas and other chemicals to launch attacks similar to three in recent weeks that spewed chlorine and sickened scores of Iraqis, the military warned Thursday.

US troops raided a car-bombing factory near Fallujah and found chlorine cylinders and propane tanks among the feared components.

The raid late Tuesday in Karma, an insurgent-dominated village between Fallujah and Baghdad, led US officials to suggest that insurgents had attempted to combine the chemicals found into a new round of chemical-laden vehicular bombs.

The latest chlorine-bombing happened Wednesday in southern Baghdad and killed at least two people and wounded 21 others. Many exhibited symptoms of exposure to chlorine, a greenish gas that burns the skin and can be fatal after a few concentrated, deep breaths.

The Iraqis in the area shocked with "successive artillery rounds, mortar rounds, bombs, rockets, ground-to-air shoulder shots, a pickup truck and three other vehicles that were already in various stages of preparation as car bombs," said Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, the second-ranking commander in Iraq. "We also found ingredients to be used to devise or enhance explosives such as fertilizer and chlorine cylinders."

The general insisted that the recent chlorine attacks did not suggest that the insurgents in "new forces capable." But said that militants were trying to "adapt to each setback where they can continue to create instability and there's what they're doing."

Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV told CNN that the troops had found "five complete buildings full of these various types of things," including 10 propane tanks. "What we are seeing is a change in tactics, but the strategy has not changed."

Military officials are also openly concerned that insurgents have adapted tactics to exploit vulnerabilities in flight patterns of military helicopters, which are expected to fly 400,000 hours this year to keep a 20 percent increase over 2006. At least eight helicopters have been downed in the last month, the latest on Wednesday when a Black Hawk crash landed in Diyala Province after coming under fire from heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. No one was wounded in the latest crash.

Odierno said that in one or three of the helicopter downings "methods ones" had been set up by insurgents. "We guess it we have a cell out there that's somewhat effective," he said.

British prince to serve in Iraq

LONDON—PRINCE HARRY IS TO serve in Iraq with his regiment in the first British royal to see action in combat for 25 years, the Ministry of Defense said Thursday.

The 22-year-old, who is third in line to the throne, is a second lieutenant in the Blues and Royals regiment, which will deploy to Iraq in May and June for six months.

Current soldiers, as Harry is known in the army, is "over the moon" about the news, according to a royal source. He will serve as a troop commander, leading 12 men in four Scimitar armored reconnaissance vehicles.

His uncle, Prince Andrew, was the last British royal to see war in the front line, serving as a Royal Navy helicopter pilot during the 1982 Falklands War.

Queen Elizabeth II learned her second son's decision to be allowed to join his regiment on the front line.

The deployment of Harry, son of Prince Charles and the late princess Diana, comes a day after Britain announced plans to reduce its troop numbers in Iraq.

Prime Minister Tony Blair said Wednesday that the number of British troops in Iraq would be cut by 1,000 to 5,500 in the next couple of months as the Iraqi authorities assume more control in the British sector.

The prince has insisted he should receive no special treatment despite royalty concerns.

"There's no way I'm going to use myself through loudhailer like the army officers' training college," said Harry at an air base last June.

He said two suspected insurgents, each believed to have played a role in separate helicopter attacks, had been detained in the past week, and two others fled on foot.

In Ramadi, the Anbar provincial capital, 150 miles, fought a three-hour battle with insurgents that officials at the Ramadi hospital said had left at least 27 Iraqis dead. One of the hospital officials, Dr Abdullah Salah, said four women and four children were among those killed. Witnesses said a house where women had been attacked by US aircraft. AFP

PRINCE Harry wearing a Cyprus in March 2006. AP

soldier any boys are out fighting for their country," he told the BBC.

He was reportedly determined to quit the army if he was not allowed to return to front line action.

Blair paid tribute to the young prince's attitude.

"I think it's very typical of him," he told the BBC.

"He's a very brave young man and he's a very determined young man who wants to be part of his regiment and part of the Army."

"You don't think that there is any special character on his part," Astrid another suggestion that he will be assigned safer duties, the elite Special de Services (SAS) unit of the army, some have voiced concern that Harry would be a target for insurgents seeking a high-profile scalp.

Acknowledging the threat, the Ministry of Defense and Clarence House, the office which handles Harry's affairs, described media speculation about where he would be deployed as "potentially dangerous." In a joint statement they said they will write to news organizations to ask them to "respect the matter of operational security" and allow Harry to complete a "normal tour of duty." AFP

US soldier draws 100 years for rape, murder of Iraqi girl

FORT CAMPBELL, KENTUCKY A US soldier was sentenced Thursday to 100 years in prison for his role in the rape and murder of a 14-year-old Iraqi girl and the slaying of her family.

Spc. Jesse Spielman, 24, admitted he was among five soldiers who plotted the March 2006 rape and murders in Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad, while they were drinking alcohol and playing cards at a traffic checkpoint.

Corley was in Iraq as members of the 101st Airborne unit involved in the 2006 murders and rape of a 14-year-old

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Gorres seeks WBO crown today

By Sabrina L. Laguesma
Contributor

CEBU—FILIPINO Z GORRES tries to fulfill a childhood dream when he challenges World Boxing Organization superflyweight champion Fernando Montiel of Mexico tonight in the main event of the "Moment of Truth" card at the Cebu City Sports Complex here.

The co-feature of the huge fight program at 20,000-capacity venue will pit Bohoknon ring sensation Ryo "Storm Weiss" Bautista against another Mexican, Marino Montiel Gonzalez, over 12 rounds for the vacant WBO Inter-continental and WBO Youth titles.

Both Montiel and Gorres made the right weight in yesterday's official weigh-in supervised by WBO's Jose Dionisville and attended by the organization's Puerto Rican president, Paco Valmorel, at the Rajah Park Hotel here.

Montiel, who earlier made at least five tries on the scales in a frantic effort to make the required weight, came in at 115.4lbs for the official weigh-in and had to step on the scales naked.

Gorres made 115lbs in just his first try.

Ryo "Storm Weiss" Bautista came in at exact 122 lbs, while Mexican Marino Gonzalez checked in at 121.5 for their WBO Youth and Inter-continental superbantam showdown tonight.

THE PROTAGONISTS

MONTIEL		GORRES
Cachulin	NICKNAME	The Dream
27	AGE	24
Los Mochis, Mexico	BIRTHPLACE	Tabogon, Aparisan Del Norte
5/4	HEIGHT	5'4
32-2-1, 24 KOs	RECORD	25-1-1, 14 KOs
75%	KO PERCENTAGE	54%
Orthodox	STANCE	Southpaw
Dec. 6, 1999	TURNED PRO	March 31, 2001
Manuel Montiel Sr	TRAINER	Freddie Roach/Wa Villamor
66	REACH	66
Manuel Montiel Sr	MANAGER	Michael Aldeguer

MOMENT OF TRUTH World champion Fernando Montiel (right) and challenger Z Gorres strike a pose after yesterday's weigh-in at the Rajah Park Hotel. (INQUIRER/GIL NAMOC)

Both Montiel and Gorres have impressive records with the Mexican having won 32 fights, 24 by knockouts, while losing only two and drawing once. Gorres has 25 victories, 14 by knockouts, one loss and one draw.

NEXT ON THE COUNTRY'S MOST WIDELY-READ GOLF MAGAZINE

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Visayas Alta Vista Golf and Country Club, Cebu Country Club, Negros Occidental Golf and Country Club & Isla Golf and Country Club

Mindanao Pueblo de Oro Golf and Country Club, Ruenos Palen Verden Golf Club & Apo Golf Club

The following golf stores/pro shops... Callaway outlets in Mega Shangri-La Mall and Pioneer Ave., Quezon City; Custom Clubmaker Golf Depot in Park Square, Makati and Alabang Town Center; Bistro Shot in Park Square and Pedestrian Mall; Mizuno outlets in Alabang, Edsa-Mall, Shangri-La Mall and Libis, Quezon City; Pacquiao/Bite outlet in Salcedo Village, Makati

And Metro Manilan's premier dining venues... The Manila Polo Club, The Makati Golf Club, City Golf in Ortigas-Pasig and Southpoint in Alabang as well as the Makati Sports Club and Celebrity Sports Club.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VALUED PARTNERS:
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Darchinyan wants Pacman

LOS ANGELES—ARMENIAN BORN AUSTRALIAN Vic Darchinyan, who defends his International Boxing Federation flyweight crown here next week against Mexican Victor Burgos, is pondering moving up to face bigger rivals.

Filipino star Manny Pacquiao is one of those Iban Darchinyan hopes to fight before ending his career, although it would mean moving up and leaving behind the dominion of his division.

That would be no mean feat as Pacquiao currently fights five divisions and more **than 8kg heavier than Darchinyan.**

"I'm not jumping too much to fight him. He's not too much bigger than me," said Darchinyan, who would hope the superfeatherweight would drop down at least one class. "I do not make the weight, I know my power. I know I'm good in that division."

While he hungers for a chance to face the shoulda/coulda/woulda boxer/puncher, the unbeaten boxer has no desire for a trip to Thailand and a unification bout against 63-2 rival Poonsawat Sitthipanya. Poonsawat, whom he dismisses as a paper lion.

Darchinyan, 27-0 with 21 knockouts, is no stranger to fight the Marquez/Pacquiao winner and hopes Aztec, the interim WBC champion behind Pongsaklek who is 43-2 with one draw and 35 knockouts. But first he must dispatch Burgos, 39-14, with three draw and 23 knockouts. AFP

Reyes to bare all-pro RP team

By Mysang S. Castillo and Jun Navarro

NO MATTER IT IS THE FINAL COMPOSITION, the Philippines is assured of a balanced, firepower-packed roster for the Southeast Asian Basketball championship in May.

Jun Reyes has the list of candidates national coach Chot Reyes has in his disposal.

Limited: Rudy Hatfield, Asi Taulava, Mick Pennisi, Kerby Raymundo and Enrico Villanueva, Fortunato Tenorio, Dondon Hontiveros, Harvey Grospe, Yeng-Guiao, Ren-Ren Ritualo, Rainulfo de Ocampo and John Arigo; Kiamfo Mark Cuptiza, Jay-Jay Ochoa-Suaol, Jimmy Mapoy and Willie Miller.

Reyes, who will also likely call the shots for that team, came up with the lineup after consultations with members of his squads one huddled meeting staff Lloyd Velasco, Tim Cone, Norman Black, Binky Favis on Thursday night.

Incidentally, the heavies formed from a very reliable source yesterday that the Serbs pass could be moved to the Philippines from Malaysia **through the efforts of telecommunications** tycoon Manny V. Pangilinan, the MVP-controlling **featured-up Philippine corporations.**

The source, who was involved in the patient-

lengthening process that brought back the country's international federation (Fiba) recognition recently, said MVP had asked that the Philippines host the multi-nation event to signal the return of RP basketball to its grand scale.

Talks are also ongoing to use the Philippine Arena (formerly Ulta) as venue with Pangilinan reportedly giving specific instructions of opening admission to the public.

A press conference, meanwhile, has been set by the PBA at noon today where Reyes will announce his selections.

The Fiba suspension on the Philippines was **lifted on Wednesday and the newly affiliated** BAP-SBP is wasting no time in coming up with a **formidable squad that will raise immediately** once it is tabbed.

Though a selection committee headed by PBL commissioner Chito Trinidad had earlier recommended a pre-cam zone for the Serbs tilt, the PBA is expected to get the concession of having the team for the qualifying rounds leading to the Fiba-Asia Championships.

The recommendation for Reyes to designate one of his assistants to handle the Serbs team is also expected to be waived in the wake of calls for a super-strong lineup.

We remember EDSA. Do you? There to ask. Be an Inquirer. INQUIRER

Canlubang zeroes in on 14th title

Bayrons fire sub-par rounds as Sweeties build 12-pt PAL Interclub bulge

By Ernesto A. Gonzales

CALAMBA (LAGUNA)—THE HOTTEST AMATEUR IN THE LAND YIELDED the spotlight to younger brother Rafael Bayron as defending champion Canlubang rumbled ahead by 12 points yesterday after three rounds of the 54th Philippine Airlines Interclub golf tournament.

At 25—two years younger than the more famous Jay Bayron—the rookie Rafael, known as Rafayo to his teammates, shot a two-under 69 to add to his six-under par 66 for 42 points that became the cornerstone of Canlubang's 145-output for the day as it romanced chief rival Manila Southwoods anew at the Old Monster course.

Jay, the national amateur champion last December and salutor of the Iloilo-Illinois Two-Ball (with pal Edwin Estrera) and his division in the JP Open last month, also broke par with a 71 for 37 points. Jun Bersin and another ace, Paul Erbaney, completed the Canlubang onslaught with 23 totals.

The powerhouse team from Laguna now has a total of 427 and is poised to go a record high 14th title and a second straight two-division sweep following its victory in the bronze category last Sunday.

The defiving Sweeties again started with 27 points for Southwoods, which has found no answer to the explosive drive by the Davao-born player, who found their way to the Canlubang lineup as members of the national caddies reinforcement.

Erdie Saboy, fresh from his disqualification in Round 1 for failing to sign his scorecard by giving 36 points, Mike Ver added 25 and Jong Lagat had a 34 that completed Southwoods' 142 production for a 415 total.

"We're not giving up," said Southwoods skipper Timby Tirante, saying that his team had since rallied from 34 points down to forge ahead although Ong conceded did not hopeful in the last round.

The final 18 holes is set today at the Dualdo de Oro course here where Southwoods gained only two points, 120-122, in the second round Thursday.

Mark Fernando, Canlubang's top scorer in the first round, gets going again with another 3-under-par 69 as Canlubang skipper Luigi Puhi, who delivered Southwoods by only four points last year.

Golfers Ed Moore, who set the pace the same four over this in historic fashion in 2004, fell further back in third place with 289.

Meanwhile, Cebu Country Club assembled 7-8 points to pull away by nine from Orchard in the Founders Division with a 360 total. Pitch Pitch stood last a point behind Orchard with 2301.

The championship in the two lowest divisions had earlier been settled with a round left. Valley all but clinched the Sportsmen's trophy by opening a 23-point lead over Villanova while Makiwilkie won honors result in the Friendship class with a 11-point margin over Bamboo.

The event's major sponsors are Active Asia, Airbus, Boeing, Bombardier, Caltimex Gold, ICTSI, Chemwest, GE Searies, GMAC, Hilton, Purple Asia and Royal Caribbean while the corporate supporters are Business Mirror, Horizon Tobacco, Glide-7, Honda Cars Ilocos, Premier Wine & Spirits, Rebisco, Metrobank Network and www.inquirer.net.

The other leaders are Century Park Hotel, Golden Fiber, Foreign Net, Lufthansa Technik and Nikai's On Target Communications.

PAMELA Southwoods' Higgy Yeo, at 18 the youngest ever to compete in the tournament, tees off on No. 11.

SWEET 42: Rafino Bayron

RAZON MEMORIAL

Salvador shoots 64, seizes lead

By Marcong R. Castillo

STA. ROSA, LAGUNA—UNHERALDED Glenn Salvador seized a one-stroke lead after 36 holes of the first-edition Don Rolando Razon Memorial, using crisp iron play for a two-under par 68 yesterday at The Country Club here.

The long-hitting 32-year-old took over the pace from former Philippine Open champion Clodualdo Aballe, who fired a level 70 and now trailed Salvador's 135 total by one.

"I will do my best to hang on to this lead until the final hole," Salvador, who led after the first round but was only to finish fourth, said in Filipino. "This could be my biggest break."

The 30-year-old Ronales had one birdie against a bogey in a round that was again played in benign conditions. He continued to struggle on the dash putting surfaces, muffing birdie chances one after the other.

Former winners Jhonnie Delantar also marched par to be at 136, three off the lead and with a solid chest at the P1.2 million championship's purse.

The charismatic Frankie Minoza also found himself in familiar terrain.

He teamed in a 72, to be eight strokes off the lead. Like last year, he needs to piece together a weekend that is nothing short of spectacular to at least contend for honors.

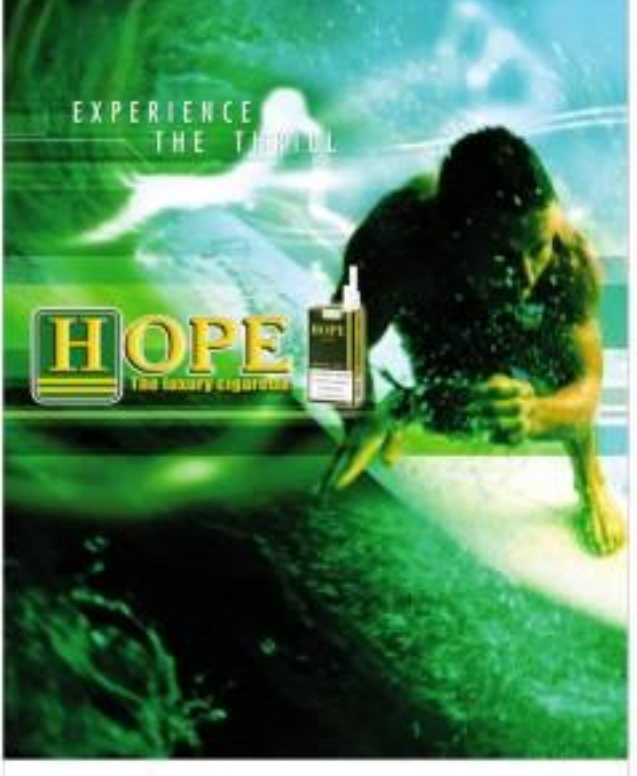
Antonio Lascuña, the veteran here three years ago, also fired a 72 and was tied with Minoza.

Busby Robert Perry-Arias also failed to make significant headway, remaining in fourth spot after a 70 for 139, just a stroke ahead of Cookie Lirio, who fired a second straight 71, and two in front of Angelo Que (72) and amateur Dottie Ardina (67).

Veteran Ruben Ismail booked the 21st slot for the weekend after nipping Boy Pamintuan in the countback. Both finished with 149s.

Also earning berths for the final two rounds were amateur Cyna Rodriguez (72-143), Marc Pecay (73-149) and Cantoc Canet, the inaugural winner in 2003, who had a 145 after a two-over par 72.

ROBERT Pictures continues his lambs on No. 6.



Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

It's official: Red Lions junk Koy

By Jasmine W. Payo

COACH KOY BANAL OFFICIALLY LOST HIS JOB[illegible] CHORES AS SAN BEDA... [illegible] confirmed at Talk 'N Text team manager Frankie Lim in interview on the Boo[illegible]

Telecommunications system Skinny 3 Smartphone, the collegiate team's top patron, made the announcement Thursday night at the Red and White Ball, an event that host... [illegible] Lim said.

Lim, who will be assisted by San Beda team manager Mike Advincula.

"Mike and I will be the OIC's (officers in charge)," said Lim. "We were asked to take care of the team. [illegible] they will make the proper announcement [illegible] the new coach next week."

Lim and Advincula [illegible] were manning the Lions' training in the last four days.

"The players are excited [illegible] that's new things," said the 46-year-old Lim.

Lim will be calling the shots when San Beda [illegible] the defending champion University of Santo Tomas in the "Duka vs. Sports" event on Sunday at the Araneta Coliseum.

"It's my school, I won't say no," said Lim after his formal introduction to the school community.

Lim was reportedly part of a short list that included Purefoods assistant coach Bonnie Magsanoc and former PBA stalwart Eric Altamirano.

Despite steering San Beda to the end of a 26-year NCAA title drought last year, Banal ran into conflict with the team's decision makers due to his other coaching obligations.

He also holds a head coaching post with Magnolia in the PBL and is an assistant mentor for Purefoods in the PBA.

"Of course I felt sad, but we could do anything about it," said San Beda forward Yousif Aljamal, last year's Rookie-Most Valuable Player.

"We, the decision of the management as we have to welcome our new coach and learn to adapt with other."

QUIT: Koy Banal

IN: Frankie Lim

NBA rookie Jose Juan Barea left the Lions high and dry when he decided to forego his remaining playing years in the collegiate ranks to play professionally in the United States.

Banal, who led the Lions to the NCAA championship in 2006, was replaced by Jamike Jarin for the 2006-07 season.

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Banal, who led the Lions to the NCAA championship in 2006, was replaced by Jamike Jarin for the 2006-07 season.

"We were all surprised when we were informed about it," the 6-foot-3 Mentor said. "It's sad, but life must go on. We have to show our fighter spirit that despite the problems, we're still united."

Lim said one of the greats in San Beda's back-to-back title runs in 1977 and 1978.

He played for several PBA teams including Alaska, Purefoods, Shell and San Miguel from 1980 to 1996 before moving to the sidelines as an assistant of Alaska and Purefoods and then getting appointed as team manager of Talk 'N Text.

Many players are big, talented but don't use their brains–Cezar

By Marvey R. Castillo

THERE ARE A FEW GRAY STREAKS IN the hair and wrinkles in the face that don't fool that bad. These, plus the rare-rimmed glasses, make Philip Cezar look like the politician that he is and a bit of the great player he once was.

But burning fans still... in the same competitive fire that helped shape his stellar [illegible] 17 years in the Philippine Basketball Association—gives one an idea of how different the game is being played these days.

The long-armed, 6-foot-3 defense specialist would give everything—and give up every thing—just to be able to measure himself head-to-head against the present day.

"There's no finesse to the game today," Cezar told the Inquirer in Philippine Multisystem right, just before tip-off of Game 1 of the Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup finals between manager Chanbara and San Miguel Beer.

While watching from the sidelines, one skills-meet hand in hand with the mind," Cezar, now 44, added. "Today, I see a many big, talented players who don't really use their brains when they play.

"If these players were there [during our time], even if they are superstars now, they would go nowhere."

The team acknowledged as "The Isbelias" didn't really name the players, but said San Miguel Beer's Dondon Hontiveros and Lordy Tugade are the only two who inquiring fans.

"Those days, players used to be bulky and strong," he said. "The skinny ones are having a hard time out there, because there [I dominance and Tugade], because there's no intelligence."

A confirmed Denny moniker until it faded when he[illegible] the right life during his prime, Cezar—the UNIVERSIAD MVP—was one of the skinny ones in the old days.

But his voice didn't present him from winning 12 titles with Crispa and later coach with Great Taste and Gilmbra San Miguel and from being ultimately named as one of the league's 25 Greatest Players of all time back in 1996.

The former vice mayor of San Juan agreed that the PBA is regressing by popularity, although he said it could be a blessing in disguise to watch the heights during the Crispa Reyes rivalry.

"It was crazy in those days," Cezar said. "If you're a Crispa player[illegible] you couldn't even hang out in the same days when the Toyota players were. I[illegible] you have to go to[illegible] dahil sa away-session."

"Ngayon, magkakasama lang, tapos[illegible] pa pasasi, aapo aang" he said. "The physicality of the game then was not masked, talagang may dugo. Kaya mas exciting. Involved talaga ang tao dun."

Philip would love the chance to be able to play in the day and age. But there should be more of the cigarettes, booze and late nights.

And he said that he'd be fine, even if it would mean wrecking the short shorts of the old days.

DEFENSIVE SPECIALIST: Philip Cezar (right) tries to block old rival Ramon Fernandez in the past Crispa-Toyota days.

Kiamco stuns Hohmann in New York tilt

KIAMCO: Big win

WARREN KIAMCO stunned former world pool champion Thorsten Hohmann of Germany 9-7, Thursday to beat one Filipino pool veteran who won in the opener of the Turning Stone Classic 9[illegible] at Verona, New York.

United States-based Filipino Jose "Joming" Parica, Jr. and Antonio Sambajon, Asian Games gold medalist Antonio Gabica and US Open runner-up Rodolfo "Boy Asiones" Luat also handled their respective rivals.

Parica, who spearheaded the Filipinos' sweep of the US billiards circuit in the 90s, bested Mike Gregory, 9-5; Sambajon defeated Tom Schuwerk, 9-6; Gabica defeated Tom di Matteo, 9-6 and Luat beat Jason Klebas, 9-5.

The huge win sent Kiamco, a newly installed member of Buggy Promotions, into a collision course with conference-mate Grady Nile in the second round. Nalle defeated Ken Shuman, 9-8.

Other tournament star artists who won their first round matches were Charlie Williams, Johnny Archer, Mike Sigel, Jr., Rodney Morris, Tony Crosby, Rafael Sanz, Shawn Putnam and Steve Lilla.

Williams defeated Tom Carpenter, 9-6; Archer blasted Carl Metcalfe, 9-6; Tennessee schoolmate Rich Steinman, 9-4; Crosby crushed Rafel Schumacher, 9-3; Sanz routed Alex Rudzenda, 9-0; Putnam repulsed Ed Hattenbrook, 9-5; and Lilla turned back Greg Sciortino, 9-6. Marilee Bernardino, Correspondent

Why can't we be like the British?

By Percy D. Dela

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA—OUR BLIND devotion to basketball prompts an unanswered question: are Professor Henry Higgins' "My Fair Lady"

Why can't we be like the British and treat James Beaumont's obsession as a sport unworthy of a nation's Olympic aspirations?

Must the we are back to the embrace of the insecure colonial basketball behavior? Must we unquestioning accord like a children with its head cut off?

We are again deluding ourselves with the impossible dream of landing an Olympic berth and worse, entering a medal in the sport.

We, the British, born of the 2012 Summer Olympics believes that the sport is a host cause is not be as much an[illegible]

Britain played 30th overall in the 2004 Olympics in Athens and, as always, remains an ubiquitous presence in the medieval Games.

But it has not diminished the resource over the desire to make it to the top tournament in Beijing next year.

The British, light years behind in the sport, are no joint competing with the Swedes, Croatians, Latvians, Finnish and other continental powers whose basketball programs are considered the best in the world.

Britain remains uncertain that as former Olympic host for the third time in 2012, it would be a good investment to vote to be the host for then, despite an automatic berth to the tournament proper.

Being a formidable field in basketball, the British would rather spend precious pounds not nursing future gold winners in individual sports.

Their most brilliant trials and errors in the style of fabled badminton Sebastian Coe and Steve Davis and archer Sybil Fenton "Governor" Newell—a gold medal winner when Britain first hosted the Games in 1908.

Newell was 52 years old at that time and remains the oldest British gold medalist in Olympic history.

For a country that has won 46 Olympic gold medals through the years, drinking from the Summer Games' cup tournament for the long-run time is a no-brainer.

COMMENTARY

Anyway would it not be practical if we temper our enthusiasm for an Olympic berth in the sport?

We can wrap ourselves with the flag of our birth, who made the sport worth embracing in the olden days.

But the time is now to stop the nonsense. The time is now to accept the fact that we are now outcasts on the international basketball stage.

Do we have to suffer more humiliation defeats to feel degraded and become super-patriot at long last?

Mmmm, Mmmm, wouldn't it be lovely if we can get practical like the British?

Are you sure, very[illegible] just you said?

In a scene obscured with the unbearable, the second Tour of California cycling marathon is a welcome relief for sports spectators.

And the only Californians and the first non-Europeans ever to win the Tour de France three times wants to make sure that lets sport a drug free.

Greg Lemond, a household name before Lance Armstrong, was to world cycling, wants drug testing policies in the sport become stricter, although it is now stricter than drug policies of Major League Baseball and the National Football League.

Lemond is calling for more stringent drug testing in the light of notorious Road Lands' Landis' win in the Tour de France last year. It found to have used performance enhancing substances. Landis could become the first person stripped of his title.

The burning question—how drug free a Philippine cycling?

* * *

Sports note: The Boost for Block Corporation "is it really a cooperative?" is the subject of a conference study from Soma. The world's[illegible] otherwise known as BROWN UBAO, is my uncle of the woods, continues to game unsuspecting customers with her rumors. I know, my household of ours, report one in Cotabato City has been passed before. I wonder what my sister reading would be like search, while my wife and I are out of the country.

SPORTSWATCH

80 tennis ace–preppers vie for honors

SAN PABLO CITY—SOME 80 ACE DEVELOPERS IN[illegible] TENNIS DEC. take center stage starting today in the 2007 Mike Arroyo Cup and Regional Invitational at the City Sports Complex here. Arroyo coach Erlinda Mike and members of the Mike team, which is celebrating its 20th year. Invitational delegations in the Philippine Tennis Association-sanctioned event organized by[illegible] and supported by Pilmico, are the boys' and girls' 10 under, 12 under, 14 under, 16 under and the unisex 10 under divisions. "We have encouraged every team for this tennis tournament to bring as many players as they can to promote positively," said Mike. "We hope it could be an annual event here in San Pablo for the benefit of the junior players in the region."

South Luzon Tangkad Sagad caging on

LOS BAÑOS, LAGUNA—FIFTEEN SCHOOLS[illegible] TODAY IN THE Quadri-annual championship of the 2007 Charlie Tangkad Sagad Basketball Tournament at the Los Baños municipal covered courts. Morning Star Montessori School leads the team rosters in the morning of the Charlie Tangkad event organized by Richard Ramirez and conceptualized by pro coach Jaworski Tiaoqui. Ramirez and Jaworski Tiaoqui are the[illegible] "Pare" Bautista of San Beda. Other pre-tournament favorites in the Adidas-supported event are the Lopez Elementary School, Avon Grade School and the Bangkong School. The five-on-five tournament is open to boys 12 years and younger.

Talaya 6-cooker finals underway

THOUSANDS OF DINKY DUMMIES[illegible] CONVERGE IN CEBU IN THE New Sibonga Cockpit in Cebu today for the finals of the 2006 entry "Sweepstakes Talaya 6-Cock Derby. Hosted by employee Danny Lagao, Robert Pi and Philip Mallonal and organized by the Sibonga Cockpit Corporation, the derby meet prestigious cocking event. Meanwhile, the 25th anniversary 6-Cock Derby gets going at the Quezon Sports Coliseum with[illegible] at the same cocking action. Dubbed as the "Sabungan ng Kampeon" derby, the four-cocker, organized by Pasaraboard, will start tonight with the 3-cock eliminations.

Hari Raredaun all set in San Juan

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY SEVEN[illegible] COMPETABLE "HARI RAREDAUN" IN the National Sandbox 8-Cock Derby five days before the start of the main[illegible] at the San Juan Coliseum. The[illegible] Raredaun" is the brainchild of the same[illegible] Mandaluyong Sandbox at the same location on March 1. Darrell, according to organizers Rodolfo Pineda and Bobbi Boney. The super-event, which offers a guaranteed purse of P10[illegible] million, will also be staged in 15 other venues across the country and expatriate country has[illegible] 1000. The champion will get P6 million. The winning[illegible] and gaffs will be provided by[illegible] respectively.

Round 2 of 'Largahan' at Balgon today

THE SECOND ROUND OF BOLGOSOM DE COCKPIT'S "LARGAHAN 6-COCK Derby" kicks off at 2 p.m. today with 128 matchfights[illegible]. Formerly two-parter cocks-eliminations the Balgon Cockpit-sponsored derby is the brainchild of the derby[illegible] by Largosa Drug Inc. and Presidential Chairman. Among them are Boy, Bong Cuyos, Rudy Cuna, Manny Pedros, two-victims of Ali Calma, Allan Baza, Damian Torres, Roger Flamingan, Mulong Tanada, Dado Tiburcio and Jun Bautista. Approximately[illegible] of 1972 million awaits the winners, said head Rudy Cuyos. Entry fee is P6,000.

130 entries collide at UP Coliseum

A FIELD OF 130 COCKERS AND[illegible] ENGAGE THEMSELVES TODAY IN METRO Manila cockpit wars when[illegible] 3-cock battle[illegible] "Gamefowl Cock Tournament" at the Los Baños Coliseum. The champion will win P10,000, the second place P5,000, third place P3,000 and fourth to 10th places P1,500 each. Rules[illegible] and Jimmy Calabia[illegible] participants in[illegible] event[illegible] Sunday. From 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. on Saturday and entries[illegible] only[illegible]. Meanwhile, the[illegible] "Midnight Cockers" activity tomorrow at 8 p.m. with 300 entries, said[illegible] manager Jake Solano.

Xavier five makes it 5 straight in Tong Lian caging

XAVIER SCHOOL COMPLETED ITS[illegible] WITH a 5-0 record in the Tong Lian Basketball Championship duplicate[illegible] by sweeping past St. Stephen, 67-57, Tuesday for their fifth straight victim at the Ginang Ka Berde College gym.

Showing the same tenacity that enabled them to top the eliminations and quarterfinal rounds, the Xavier cagers played true to form in the final half to sweep the[illegible] of three victories.

"I have to credit the boys for their hard work and determination," said coach Jojo Iroman. "This is a great achievement for the boys and a great honor for the school."

MEMBERS of the Xavier team and manager Caesar Wenge[illegible] celebrate their victory.

The Xavier boys, managed by sportsman Caesar Wenge[illegible], started on the[illegible] and never looked back as they[illegible] and[illegible] guard Ronald Ong and Brian Tan.

The school, which has produced a number of star players including Joseph Yeo, ruled the court without dropping a game.

In a show of force, Ong and Tan combined for[illegible] with 22 and 21 points, respectively. Ernest Ong, son of former PBA star Alvin Ong, shone in the[illegible] and scored 10 points.

DEFENDER Utah's Deron Johnson

Five-time All-Star Johnson dies, 52

AUSTIN, TEXAS—DENNIS JOHNSON, a five-time All-Star who won three NBA titles, died from a heart attack aged 52 on Thursday, the league said on its website.

Johnson collapsed after leading a practice session for NBA Development League roster the Austin Toros.

"He greeted me by his nickname. This is a big loss for us," Toros vice president of coke Rick Epstein said.

One of the NBA's all-time great defensive guards, Johnson won a title with the Seattle SuperSonics in 1979 when he was named the finals MVP and two with the Boston Celtics in 1984 and 1986.

Averaging 14.1 points a game in a 13-year career including spells in Seattle, Phoenix and Boston, Johnson retired in 1990 as only the 11th player in NBA history to score more than 15,000 points and dish out 5,000 assists.

"Whether he was leading his teams to NBA championships or coaching young men, the cornerstone of greatness, as Dennis Johnson's contributions to the game attest far beyond the basketball court," NBA commissioner David Stern said in a statement.

"Dennis was a man of extraordinary character as both a competitor and person for the game and his loss will be felt throughout the basketball community."

Following his illustrious playing career which included some straight achievements to Mist all-defensive teams, Johnson remained with the Celtics as a scout and became an assistant coach in 1993.

Reuters

Bulls gore Cavs, snap losing run

NEW YORK—THE CHICAGO BULLS SNAPPED A SEVEN-GAME LOSING streak in Cleveland with an 04-79 victory over the Cavaliers on Thursday, Land Ching leading the way for the visitors with 38 points.

The Bulls, who had lost five of six games heading into the All-Star break, turned in a solid effort and put the game away with a 16-5 run in the fourth quarter for a second straight victory.

Chicago also made all 12 shots from the free throw line while the Cavaliers, the NBA's worst free throw-shooting team, sank just eight of their 16 shots from the line.

Ben Wallace had 14 points, limited Lebron James to 19 rebounds and had a season-high seven blocks for the Bulls, and also made two crucial free throws late in the quarter to help seal the win.

Wallace is just a 41 percent shooter from the line.

"We did a great job of steering the ball around," Wallace said in person.

"Everybody was playing together. When we play together like that and keep the game simple, good things usually happen to us."

Chris Duhon scored 16 points for the Bulls, while Kirk Hinrich added 11 points as Chicago shot 44 percent from the field to just 38 percent for the Cavs.

Lebron James led the Cavaliers with 29 points and seven rebounds, while Larry Hughes added 20 points and eight rebounds but Cleveland could not overcome the absence of several regulars.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas sat out a fourth straight game to attend to a family health matter and Sasha Pavlovic and Damon Jones missed the game due to illness.

The Bulls (24-25) pulled to within a game and a half of the second-place Cavaliers (26-23) in the Central Division standings with the win.

The Miami Heat remained in the mix when they won the NBA championship for the first time since taking the title last June, but were handed by the Dallas Mavericks, 112-109.

Dirk Nowitzki had 31 points and 11 rebounds for the Mavs, while the Heat were without Dwyane Wade due to a shoulder injury.

Gilbert Arenas scored 43 points and Washington survived a wild overtime at the buzzer to stay victorious, 109-106.

Reuters

LARRY Hughes of the Cleveland Cavaliers dips the ball away from Ben Gordon [7] of the Chicago Bulls in the fourth quarter of the NBA game in Cleveland, Ohio.

Tarlac hosts marathon's 4th qualifier

THE 31ST NATIONAL MILO MARATHON returns to Tarlac City on Sunday for the fourth qualifying run of the 2007 season.

The top three male and female finishers in the 21K event shall earn tickets to the national finals slated on Nov. 18 in Metro Manila. They will also bring home trophies and cash prizes of P30,000 to the champions, P15,000 to the runners-up and P9,000 to the third placers.

Last year's 21K winners—Abraham Guerrero Jr. of The Summit University and Bonita Mangapit of University of the Cordilleras—are expected to defend their respective titles.

Meanwhile, local organizers in Tarlac City headed by Arnold Rodriguez are targeting more than 10,000 participants for the third straight year. Last year, a total of 10,000 runners joined the event in the 5K, 10K and 21K distances.

Tarlac City Mayor Aso Mendoza and Vice Mayor Jose Cabal have been invited to fire the starting gun at 6 a.m. in front of the Tarlac City Hall.

Mike Sparks Events Executive Dir. Gus ong is advising all runners to be at the starting area early for hotting and cheering.

After the Tarlac City leg, the 31st National Milo Marathon takes a summer break. It will resume on June 24 in General Santos City.

Aguilar heads Driver of Year 3 contenders

IT'S GOING TO BE A THREE-CORNERED race among Olympian Akeem Aguilar, Team Fly and Mitsun Bookstore for the Golden Wheel International Driver of the Year award.

They were chosen from among 11 motorsports champions considered for the prestigious award on Feb. 28 at the Pagoo Theater Airport Casino Filipino.

Aguilar, the 2006 national motocross champ is eyeing his third Golden Wheel and his second straight International Driver plum after sinking the country's first high-scored crown in last year's 450D DAM Asian Supercross Championship series.

He shared the 21st Golden Wheel award with Formula 3 driver Popoy Marcos and Asian Karting Queen Michela Bumgarner in 2004 and was hailed as the first Golden Wheel International Driver last year.

Ag, also nominated for the International Driver award last year, is tagged the strongest contender this time for his impressive showing in the 2006 Asian Formula 3 Series.

Bumgarner, a newcomer in the International Driver category, has been joining karting competitions in Italy. The biggest but, however, is in the Asian Karting Open Championships where he tops the championship fight for the Philippines after Michela Bumgarner held it from 2004 to 2006.

The final decision will be revealed on the awards night to be graced by the 11 champions, representatives officials and organizers.

Tiger Woods beats Clark in Match Play

TIGER WOODS: Playing better

MARANA, ARIZONA—TIGER WOODS looked more brighter for Tiger Woods on Thursday as he stayed firmly on course for an eighth successive PGA Tour title at the world's WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship.

The world number one, who bounced South Africa's Tim Clark 3&2 in the second round, was one of only two top-10 seeds to reach the third stage at Dove Mountain's Gallery Golf Club.

Twice champion Woods said his game had improved markedly from the opening day when he needed 20 holes to dump Britain's Ian Poulter out.

"I played better than I did yesterday, which is great, and tomorrow, hopefully, I can play even better than I did today," Woods told reporters after sealing victory at the pay-three 11th.

"I played well today and put a lot of pressure on Timmy (Jason Tim-

mons) straight right away, he's still got a lot to learn. Clark is playing his first event of the year after battling a neck injury.

"I just wanted to put as much pressure as I possibly could on him and not give him any holes with bogeys," added Woods, who set up his 4&3 win by winning five of the first six holes.

"I made a few putts, which was nice, and Tim made a couple of mistakes, and I ended up having a pretty good-sized lead early in the match." Tournament champion in 2003 and 2005, Woods will next be played or Jo Grim Rower, Woods has not finished worse than second on the PGA Tour since the Western Open last July.

Only fellow American Nelson, who won 11 consecutive titles on the 1940s Tour, has produced a longer winning streak.

Woods will, however, face an intriguing obstacle in Friday's third round in the shape of Australian Jeff Jeander Hink. Of-hwa, who beat Swedish veteran Peny Jakbinder 2 and 1 on Thursday.

The last time the two met at the inconstant Match Play Championship, in the second round in 2005, O'Hara triumphed 3 and 1.

The outright-leading Australian, although yet to win on the PGA Tour, is regarded as one of the best putters in the game.

"I'm sure he will take positive vibes from what he did the last time we played," Woods said. "But the whole idea is you've got to play well."

Rain and strengthening winds have been forecast for Friday with a chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon.

Woods also knows, if he is to win this month's title, he is likely to play at least one average-round out of four.

Woods and O'Hara are scheduled to start their third-round match at 1200 local (1900 GMT).

Reuters

Park, Prammanasudh share Fields lead; Delasin 5 behind

RAPOLIE, HAWAII—SUNGHE Angela Park shot a 6-under 66 in windy conditions for a share of the first-round lead with Stacy Prammanasudh in the Welch Open on Thursday.

Filipino-American Dorothy Delasin is in contention following a 71 (2) on which Filipino Amateur Bianca Pagdanganan had it in jeopardy after a 74. Gib 164.

The 18-year-old Park, making just her fourth US LPGA Tour start, showed maturity and composure in difficult conditions at the wide-open Ko Olina Golf Course.

So 10 Hal, who needs to play just eight more events to qualify for the World Golf Hall of Fame this year, made a late entry to open with a 67. Meaghan Francella survived a triple bogey and won at 68, along with Kyeong Bae.

Park started strong, birdieing five of the first seven holes and making the turn at 31. She drove into the rough for a bogey on No. 10, but hit a wedge to six inches for a birdie. A par on 14 and back-to-back birdies on the 16th to match Prammanasudh.

Park earned her first US LPGA paycheck last week—worth $6,625 (rand,000)—for her 32nd place tie at the season-opening 36th Open.

After a successful amateur career that included five American Junior Golf Association wins, Park earned her LPGA Tour card by tying for fifth at Q-school.

Prammanasudh, who spent most of 2006 on the US Futures Tour, started on No. 10 and made the turn at 32.

The second-round leader Jerod Francella at 69 and was removed more than an hour after her round after she sprained her wrist on 7th

Jeong Jang, Ai Yeong Lee, Nicole Perez and Sin Hoon also Ore.

AP

Bumgarner eyes Formula Atlantic

FOLLOWING HER IMPRESSIVE debut in the Asian Formula 3 last year, three-time Asian Karting Champion Michela Bumgarner is forever easy on to fulfill more single-seat formula racing this season.

The 17-year-old Bumgarner aims to tackle the Formula Asia series through the 1st three-race Autocol Motor Show set out Feb. 23 to March 4 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Accelerate is an entry-level professional training series/program intended to groom minority drivers for the Champ Car Atlantic and World Series. The program is a brainchild of Gale Bayers (former NFL running back for Chicago Bears) and Ray Lewis (NFL linebacker for Baltimore Ravens), the primary owners of SRL Racing —the first minority-owned and driven team in the Champ Car World Series history.

SRL Racing is being assisted by world renowned Newman Wach Racing and has signed partners Reign with Karting League and the Rick Ware Racing School in order to ensure the explosive racing component of minority drivers and new talents.

After the training, Bumgarner will be considered to drive in the Champ Car Atlantic and World Series.

"We're very much excited about this program," said Bumgarner. "This is an extremely different event. It's like starting all over again. But I will say my town is under the country proud as the first Filipina in the Formula Atlantic scene."

Bumgarner is being supported by Prima, Accel, Goodyear, Unifi Gas, City Gate Karting, Department of Tourism, Automobile Association Philippines, Oakley, Rewards, Solar Sports and Dolfin. Race for this endeavor.

Bumgarner and Accelerate Drivers' Illness are set for finals Cart Time Trials, Formula Car Training and Grade Driver's Instruction and physical training.

MICHELE Bumgarner tests her Formula 3 car with Andy Diaz, owner of the management company Strategic Asset Marketing which is now handling her motorsports career.

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BUSINESS
Editor Raul O. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Aussie firm plans $1.5-B investment in RP

BSP to prepay more loans

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS has set aside $805 million to pay more foreign debt ahead of maturity within the next two months to cut on interest expenses.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. yesterday said the foreign loans to be settled would originally mature later this year up to next year. He added that the debt prepayment would yield $9 million in interest savings.

"The obligations to be prepaid include a $175-million loan due this September and $130 million in loans and floating rate notes with final maturity scheduled in April 2008," Tetangco said.

In 2006, the BSP retired $1.4 billion worth of foreign debts ahead of maturity, including the $225 million in remaining debt to the International Monetary Fund, which paved the way for the country's early exit from a post-program monitoring arrangement with the fund.

The prepayment of foreign debts is part of the BSP's policy mix to deal with strong capital inflows. The strategy also includes the recent liberalization of foreign exchange trading rules, the shift to local sources of financing and the building up of foreign reserves.

From January to July 9 this year, net inflows of foreign portfolio investments reached $$38.55 million, dwarfing the $$20.07 million inflows a year ago. More significantly, remittances from

MAY SU

BHP Billiton pursues Mindanao nickel project

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST MINER, BHP BILLITON, MAY INvest up to $1.5 billion in a nickel project in Mindanao, Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes said yesterday.

"It could be anywhere from $800 million to $1.5 billion. That is the cost of setting up the operation and also the processing plant," Reyes told reporters after his meeting with BHP Billiton officers led by Philip Hopkins, group manager for regional development.

Billiton, in partnership with local firms Mallcomb Mining Corp. and AustAsia Gold Mining Corp., is exploring a potentially large nickel deposit on an 11,799-hectare reservation in the Diwalwal gold mining area in Davao Oriental.

A billion-dollar investment would be a major boost for the Philippines, which, despite record high metal prices, has had little success attracting big foreign miners due to legal uncertainties, political risk and opposition from pro-

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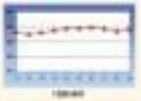

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SCIENCE/HEALTH

Editor Cesar O. Mangosing

7 out of 10 soldiers in Isabela suffer from worm infection

By Tess R. Salazar

SEVEN OUT OF 10 Filipino soldiers in Gamu, Isabela are afflicted with different types of parasitic worms, as revealed in a 2005 survey done by the University of the Philippines' National Institutes of Health and College of Public Health.

The survey examined 207 out, mostly enlisted personnel and officers, of 1,000 soldiers in Camp Emilio Aguinaldo military camp in Gamu, Isabela Province. The soldiers in the camp are deployed in areas covered Region 2.

Hookworm infected 55 percent of GMC and 26 percent of enlisted personnel while 15 percent were afflicted with whipworm and 11 percent were afflicted with ascaris.

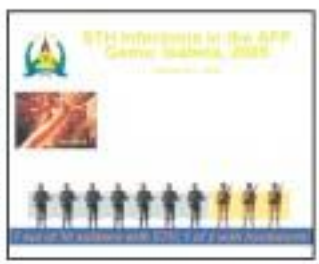
The soldiers' ages ranged from 20 to over 50 years old.

The WHO's tropical disease study conducted in 2002 revealed that those afflicted with worms may not necessarily exhibit probalist. Dr. Vicente Y. Belizario, parasitologist of UP-NIH and College of Public Health, also said that 47 percent of soldiers stationed in Northern Luzon were actually found to harbor hookworms.

He added that there has been no data available with soldiers assigned to Mindanao, which is considered to be most worm infested region in the country.

So, how did these soldiers get the worms? One culprit may be the traditional "boodle fight." Add to that the factors of everyday living of soldiers in the field.

Dr. Lulu Bravo, vice chancellor and executive director of the UP National Institutes of Health in Manila said people exposed to the soil are vulnerable to helminths. The risk is significantly increased with people eating with their bare hands. She stressed, "Wounded soldiers to be evaluated and documented every six months. She also said, however, that the government must likely has no deworming program for its soldiers.



Deworming

Bravo added that a deworming program is important to halt the complications of worm infestations among Filipinos. Because infested with worms can suffer from malnutrition, decreased concentration and other serious complications during pregnancy.

The top keys in the Armed Forces of the Philippines, however, does not see any clear and present danger of parasitism among its ranks.

Brig. Gen. Isabel Espino, surgeon general of the AFP said that nothing in the statistics of admitted and out-patient soldiers in Camp Isabela show worm infestation.

He added that the leading causes of illnesses do not include parasites, but only the top 10 causes of disease from January to December 2006 are acute gastroenteritis, influenza, typhoid fever, pneumonia, malaria,

Gov't to make up for last year's low spending

PORCINE CHARMERS Johnny Ray Barong, 36, is selling these pig images carved out of amber for P25 apiece. In Baguio City, woodcarvers and manufacturers came up with these charmers to mark the Chinese year of the fire boar.

In '07, officials not keen on reducing budget deficit

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT INCLINED to cut its budget deficit this year to a level lower than last year's P92.2 billion, saying the economy needs to compensate from the slowdown in 2006 that cut its estimated economic growth.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. said the government would only observe the P62 billion deficit ceiling programmed for 2007 and not aim for a lower deficit figure.

"We (the government) don't want to tighten spending any further," Andaya said, noting that the economy would not gain much with a greatly reduced budget gap.

He said the government would need to engage in pump priming this year after it was hampered from doing so in 2006.

The government last year had instead relied on pump-priming the economy by maximizing spending allowed under the 2006 budget. But it was not able to do so due to congress' failure to pass the proposed 2006 national budget of P1.063 trillion.

The government then had to operate using a reenacted budget from 2005, which was about P300 billion lower.

In October, Congress approved a P46.9 billion supplemental budget, but economic managers said the incremental funds came too late to finance full-scale revenue-related programs.

The supplemental budget was thus used to pay liabilities of line agencies, including subsidy payments to the Government Service Insurance System.

Economic managers said the economy could have grown higher but were had Congress approved the proposed national budget.

The economy accelerated by its fastest pace in three years in the fourth quarter, growing by 7.6 percent from the year-ago period, falling short of the 8.3 percent target.

Operating on a reenacted budget was supposedly led to a lower-than-programmed deficit last year.

The budget gap last year hit only P92.2 billion, much lower than the P132-billion ceiling mired under the fiscal program for 2006.

Last year's deficit was already lower than the ceiling of P62 billion for 2007, but Andaya said the government was not looking at reducing the deficit target for this year.

He said the government wanted to maximize spending, especially for achievers-related projects this year.

Earlier, the government announced plans to spend P126 billion more for infrastructure over the medium term to boost economic growth.

Andaya said the amount would come from expected savings this year and the next four years resulting from factors like declining interest rate and appreciation of the peso, among others.

A drop in interest rate reduces the government's cost of borrowings, while an appreciation of the local currency trims the peso value of its foreign-denominated debts.

The Department of Budget and Management earlier drafted a budget program until 2010. But the program was made when interest rates were still high and the peso was weaker. Interest rate and exchange rate movements, therefore, would result in savings.

The government has set a goal of increasing its spending on infrastructure once the median term to 5 percent of its gross domestic product to be at par with its counterparts in the Southeast Asian region.

Currently, the Philippine government's spending for infrastructure is below 3 percent of GDP. Poor infrastructure has often been cited a major factor that discourages the entry of foreign investments, narrowing economic growth.

Petroleum firm set on holding maiden offer

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lucson

SAN MIGUEL OIL COMPANY PHOENIX Petroleum Philippines Inc. is hoping to raise as much as P200 million from a public offer in the middle of the year to take advantage of the spike in the market, according to the firm's top official.

Philippine Stock Exchange president Francis Lim said Phoenix Petroleum yesterday filed its application for its initial public offer.

Its offer size ranges from P101 million to P200 million.

Phoenix Petroleum is a company registered with the Board of Investments.

Phoenix Petroleum president Antonio Uy said the company would fund the company's plan to put up additional retail stations and depot facilities in Mindanao and Luzon.

Phoenix Petroleum will offer 20 to 40 million shares at P5.01 P1.0 apiece.

It has tapped BDO Capital to manage its public offer.

Phoenix Petroleum's total assets are estimated at P500 million.

Its biggest shareholder is Phoenix Petroleum Holdings, owned by the Uy family.

"Since we are a B2B registered company, it is our mandate to list in three years," Uy said.

"Now is the right time to list, given the market conditions. (We hope) to broaden our shareholder base and raise some funds for our expansion projects."

Phoenix Petroleum opened its first gas station in June 2005 in Davao del Sur.

Today, it has more than 30 retail service stations.

By end-2007, 30 more will be added, bringing the total number of retail service stations to 50, the company said in a statement.

Phoenix Petroleum is a Davao-based corporation and is a member of The Llitton Group of Companies—a low profile conglomerate with various business interests in Mindanao and Manila.

Lanao firm seeks $300M to build hydropower plant

By Abigail L. Flo

LANAO HYDROPOWER DEVELOPMENT Corp. is currently in talks with four foreign investors and a number of lenders to secure the more than $300 million it needs to finance the construction of the 225-megawatt (MW) Agus 5 hydropower plant.

In a recent interview, Lanao Hydro chair Sudharsan Sangaragan said the company was in serious discussions with possible partners, all foreign companies, for the project.

One of the investors already has an existing business in the country, he said.

Based on how talks were going, Sangaragan said Lanao Hydro should be able to sign with at least one partner by June.

Apart from the prospective investors, he said the company was also talking to some multilateral and private lenders to provide 70 percent of Agus 5's total project cost, including interest during construction.

The three project cost, he related, come up to around $261 million. Including interest during construction, however, the overall likely comes to just the $300 million mark.

Construction should start by December, Sangaragan said.

Lanao Hydro will be constructing the Agus 5 hydropower plant under a joint sales agreement (JSA) with the National Power Corp.

Sangaragan said that the JSAs are more explosive, and that any party interested in building merchant plants in the Visayas and Mindanao, where there is a need for new power generation capacities, is welcome.

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SM group to restructure EPCIB, convert non-core assets to cash

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE SM GROUP HAS MAPPED OUT A COR-porate restructuring plan for Equitable PCI Bank, which includes the sale of non-core assets, to clear the way for its consolidation with Banco de Oro Universal Bank.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, EPCIBank said its board of directors had approved the disposal of its equity investments in certain publicly listed and non-listed corporations, as well as the dissolution of certain non-operating, non-stock companies.

The bank also approved the hiving off in order to handle the equity placements of listed shares and the engagement of an investment manager to implement the sale of non-listed shares.

"(The plan is to) convert a lot of these non-core assets into cash, and what we'll do is to convert them to cash and to distribute it to our shareholders," said Banco De, concurrent president of EDC and EPCIBank. "This will have a positive impact on our bottomline."

In an interview yesterday, Tan confirmed that the bank would sell shares to certain public bodies, but declined to identify the buyers.

He also identified the non-listed assets, which include portfolio investments, foreclosed pieces of property, and other assets acquired as "dacion en pago" or "payments in kind."

"The asset(s) were acquired over a long period of time," Tan explained. "For some of them, the values have gone up, and it's a good time to get rid of these assets."

EPCI Bank said that after the regulatory bodies approved the merger of the two banks, officials would proceed with the consolidation and integration of their respective subsidiaries. Equitable Exchange Inc. and EDC Investment Corp., as well as PCI Investor Information Center Inc., and Equitable Data Center.

Investment banking subsidiaries PCI Capital Corp. and EDC Capital Corp. will also be integrated into Banco de Oro EPCI Inc.

The board also adopted a resolution authorizing the transfer/hiving off of its non-bank advisory committee from one to the other, effective immediately.

London-based credit rating agency Fitch Ratings yesterday said the merger between Banco de Oro Universal Bank and Equitable PCI Bank should safeguard the combined entity into a "real force" in the years ahead.

The rough terms of acquisitions, Fitch said that BDO had grown rapidly in recent years to become one of the country's major banks, controlling 7.7 percent of system assets on a consolidated basis, at parent level.

The merger of equals is expected to be completed this quarter, pending the necessary regulatory approvals. Together, the two banks will form the country's second largest bank with P675 billion in combined assets, accounting for 16 percent of commercial bank system assets.

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Aussie firm plans $1.5-B investment in RP

From page B1

orld bishops and environmentalists.

Current estimates of the project's initial deposit, based on more than 600 drill holes, are about 1.6 billion tons at 1.2 percent nickel. The project is scheduled to start commercial production in 2008 (subject to permits obtained).

Static idle and billion was in production, with more than local owners, including Benguet Corp., which operates another nickel project in Zambales province.

BHP Billiton is currently the world's biggest diversified resources company and listed both in the Australian and London stock markets.

The company has a market capitalization of $77.8 billion in 2006 and has 39,000 employees in more than 130 operations in 25 countries worldwide, the company said in its website.

"The company has conducted extensive exploration mapping and drilling in these areas and has recently carried out pre-feasibility studies," Reyes said. The BHP has estimated that the country has $1 billion in unexplored copper, gold, nickel resources.

The Philippine mining sector was one of the world's biggest before falling into decline in the 1980s due to neglect, environmental mishaps and climbers over land ownership, the labor and local communities said in a report.

Nickel, which adds strength and sheen to stainless steel, is one of the strongest performing metals this year on the London Metal Exchange due to tight supply and demand from industries in Europe China.

Global prices of nickel have soared almost 20 percent so far this year, hitting a new high of $40,250 a ton on Wednesday, helped by supply shortage.

BSP to prepay more loans

From page B1

ourcers. Filipino workers are hitting 45-time highs, exceeding $1 billion in the first eight months of 2006.

This developed as the fresh foreign exchange (forex) inflow measures approved by the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board, which will take effect on April 2, triggered volatility in the peso-dollar market yesterday. The local currency traded between 48.148 and 48.36 against the dollar before closing at 48.155, stronger than Thursday's finish of 48.20-21.

On Thursday the BSP approved an increase in banks' allowable foreign currency exposure to 20 percent of unimpaired capital—known as the overbought limit—as a net basis, or as much as 30 percent of unimpaired capital or $30 million, whichever is lower. The increase in the overbought cap was matched by a 30 percent (of unimpaired capital) or $30 million whichever is lower limit on the overbought position or the amount by which the banks are allowed to sell in the open market.

"This move is more similar to the harmony of resident foreign investment value that took place in Korea in December," quote the opposite of the capital controls imposed in Thailand the same month. We do not expect the BSP to adopt that like capital controls if the peso continues to strengthen," said ING analyst Philip Wee.

The overbought limit was earlier tightly set by the BSP at 2.5 percent of unimpaired capital or $5 million, whichever was lower, while that's was an limit on the overseld positions.

"All these are aimed at slowing the peso's strength, within market-driven methods, in our view," said Jojo Ortega, vice president at stock brokerage Philippine Equity Partners.

"The measures demonstrate the government's preoccupation with having to deal with having the rest of the world wanting to lend you for cheaper, and the measures do really help to slow that," ING Bank analyst Tim Condon said.

"We expect the authorities will, like their counterparts in the rest of the region, continue to open up the capital account in an effort to get the excess supply of US dollars offshore in order to slow the peso appreciation," he said.

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BUSINESS

Insurance firms hike premiums

By Michelle V Rosen

INSURANCE COMPANIES HAVE STARTED raising their premiums due to the adverse effects of declining yields on fixed-income investments.

"If interest rates are declining, insurance firms have to adjust prices to maintain profitability. Otherwise, it will suffer in the end when it is unable to service claims," Antonio de Rosas, chief business officer of Sequoia Life Insurance Philippines, said in a briefing yesterday.

De Rosas said the increase in insurance premiums was a strategy adopted industry-wide, noting that investment in government securities and fixed-income instruments account for the bulk of the investment portfolio of most insurance firms.

He noted it was the first time in 16 years that Insurance Commission would increase premium rates.

De Rosas said that in the case of Sequoia, the higher premiums would apply only to new insurance products.

Drop in yields on government securities blamed

Sequoia will stop selling old insurance products that charged lower premiums and give higher yields.

Rodolfo de Rosas, president and chief executive officer of Sequoia, agreed that increasing premiums would help improve the company's level of solvency.

But the fourth consecutive auction last Monday, January rates on short-term government securities fell to historic lows.

The 91-day T-bill rate breached the 3-percent mark to settle at 2.885 percent.

The drop in interest rate to record lows is attributed to the high level of excess cash in the market.

The government has decided to issue less Treasury bills and bonds amid its declining budget deficit, which allowed it to borrow less from the capital market.

Sequoia has set a 20-percent growth target this year in terms of premium collection.

De Rosas said the company expected an increase in sales, despite a hike premium rates, as the improving macroeconomic environment was once translating into higher household incomes.

Kinsan could Sequoia to 1.08 in terms of premium collection among 34 life insurance firms in the country.

It is not worth was placed at P1.174 billion.

The company plans to enter the top 15 in two years, he said.

De Rosas said the company was looking at acquiring smaller insurance firms to support Sequoia's growth target and enable it to raise its capital as required by the Insurance Commission.

Because of the increased capitalization requirement, De Rosas said the consolidation of insurance firms would be expected.

ICTSI 2006 profit surges 37% to ₱1.85B

By Riza T. Olchondra

PORT OPERATOR INTERNATIONAL Container Terminal Services Inc. recorded a 37-percent growth in net profit last year to P1.845 billion from P1.347 billion in 2005 due mainly to increase from operations abroad.

ICTSI said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange that foreign operations accounted for 68 percent of the port operator's net income from just 34 percent in 2005.

ICTSI's foreign container volume grew 34 percent from 2005, driven mainly by the addition of the company's Madagascar and Indonesia port operations, and strong growth in the company's Brazil unit.

The Manila International Container Terminal at South Harbor is ICTSI's flagship port remained, but it also operates ports in Japan, Indonesia, Poland, Brazil, Syria and Madagascar.

Foreign container volumes now account for 86 percent of total, as compared with 55 percent in 2005.

"Container handling volumes at our international cash centers in grew strongly, and after a disappointing first half, we are now experiencing positive volume growth at our Manila terminal," ICTSI chairman and CEO Enrique K. Razon Jr. said in a statement.

ICTSI added that its consolidated gross revenues reached ₱12.89 billion last year, 14-percent more than the previous year's ₱11.64 billion.

ICTSI handled consolidated volumes of 1.995 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in 2006, 9 percent higher income than the 1.830 million TEUs handled in 2005.

Domestic operations accounted for 62 percent of the consolidated volume at 1.233 million TEUs.

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Firm eyes IPO by 2008

ELECTRONIC PROCUREMENT company RetailTrade plans to raise ₱1 billion in a portion of its shares to the public through an initial public offering (IPO).

"If we execute properly, this year, and we see confidence then we will file, we will go public in 2008," said RetailTrade president Dante M. Bravo.

The first thing is so much preparation that goes into having an IPO so we are getting ready," he added.

Bravo said RetailTrade recorded ₱2.2 million in revenues last year and a profit of ₱400,000, marking its second straight year of profitability.

RetailTrade was founded in 2000 by ayala & Company, Inc., Ayala Corporation, Bonjour Holdings Corporation, JG Summit Holdings, Inc., the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company and Yehey! Corporation, Inc. as an e-marketplace.

It has since evolved into a business process outsourcing company that specializes in electronic procurement and supply chain management services and solutions.

RetailTrade's core service offerings fall under three main businesses: Strategic sourcing and supply management, SAP-integrated solutions, and global B2B services for procurement and technical support for value-added firms. Rhea T. Obmerga

Editor Cesar D. Margeway
PROPERTY

Giving ideal accommodation solution to traveling execs

By Charles E. Bukar

PROPERTY MANAGERS usually refer to a team of professionals who specialize in marketing, leasing, maintaining and even refurbishing of buildings and edominiums, the associated land.

"In our case, we team up with developers of commercial or vacation properties to provide high-quality guest services as well as management and marketing systems for our clients to attract guests and owners," said Joey Bermas-Ilao, VP for Sales and Marketing of Quantum Hotels and Resorts.

Established in 2000, the company now manages several properties in the Philippines. How serviced apartments within the Makati Business District (MBD) Towers, RBA

THE SUBIC Hobbit Villa a Quantum Hotels and Resorts' first venture in managing resort and retirement development.

Manhattan Garden City
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From the LRT-2 along Aurora Boulevard, Araneta and C.P. in Quezon City and Manila's commercial belt are just minutes away. The MRT-3 along EDSA brings Makati, Ortigas and Taft Avenue within easy reach. Both lines join up with the LRT-1, making it easy to go anywhere from Monumento in Caloocan to the heart of Pasay City.

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Be in the middle of a pulsating lifestyle and leisure center, the Araneta Center. From your home, a four-story **transfer station** with a hotel-style lobby, grand staircase and four passenger elevators brings you to the third level of Gateway Mall, which hosts the Ultra, a unique floating garden. From here, simply walk to the Araneta Coliseum, Ovo Bacolod's SM, Shopwise, Ali Mall or Farmers Plaza.

Surrounded by the comforts of home.

When you're done exploring the world outside, your home is just a breath away. Whether it's an executive studio or cozy bedroom suite, **Manhattan Parkway** offers you soothing views of the Araneta Center and Manila Bay. What's more, enjoy hours of active play at the fourth-level garden deck. There are trellised walkways, jogging trails, a fitness station, an indoor waterscape and a gym. And if that's not enough, a freethrow hoop is in store play amenities at the upcoming phases.

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Macau setting the stage for the boom

LIVING ARCHITECTURE

Marcos de Guzman Jr.

A FEW DAYS IN MACAU GIVE ME A sense of déjà vu on the theme of a home. Either in the handsome bridges and wide highways are the intense preparations and preservice planning by an city officials. Several huge buildings now under construction are a testament to the coming birth of a new Macau.

Apparently, the big city infrastructure was first put in place before investors were even lured to erect their skyscraper and casinos. Elsewhere, new roads are created only when traffic becomes unbearable. In Macau, big business is presented with a clean progressive landscape at the outset, much like the beginning scenes of a MM city.

In one country planned communities like Southgate, Alabang and Ortigas were developed by the private sector, not the government. In fact, in our public phones, great city development blueprints had been drawn up open sun, but the lack of will, not to mention the funding, to implement these, but the managed more active private sector investments.

Firm commitment

The success of a city is brought about by a government's firm commitment to make good on its promises. Seeing concrete steps toward improving infrastructure and public works fosters the investors, since they know that the developments they put up will not be wasted on a stagnant city.

Imagine the frustration of spending billions of dollars worth of infrastructure, based on the promise of a government to build a road and an airport in a certain area and later finding out that the tape has stopped it from following. But if the government has a track record of fulfilling its promises to big business, then their country would be a paradise for investors.

It's just too bad that our government is one busy fending off bad publicity and chalking up "peg" points, instead of focusing on improving roads, building bridges, and upgrading utilities and services, which are the backbone of construction and industry. There must be clear rules and guidelines that are supportive of investors, rather than impose on them. Investors allow small officials to filch and peg up their personal net egg.

Obstacles

In our country, a homeless developer has countless obstacles to put up units. Developers have to build their own expressway interchange and connecting roads to get to their property. They have to have their own generator sets since the public supplied power is unreliable. They have to excavate their own wells and treat their own water towers to ensure an adequate supply.

Developers have to get rid of squatters inhabiting their areas, since most of these "potential voters" had been threatened by the local government for decades. Those who follow the laws strictly may face a disadvantage if they come up with a competitor who has paid his way through.

We spend so much money on public relations that there is almost only an assigning their names to roads rather than refining existing laws to be more investor-friendly. It brings to mind a bumper sticker I once read: "If you want to do something, do it now before they make a law against it."

AMONG THE MODERN structures, the Babylon Casino at the Fisherman's Wharf stands out.

Must-see sites

Also in Macau, I observed with some degree of envy how much importance they placed on preserving their old churches and buildings. Although, these structures are not as impressive as those we have in our own churches, they placed them up in their tourist brochures as "must-see" sites! It makes me hope we could be more careful and proud of preserving our own heritage. We have so many truly beautiful heritage sites that are either left to deteriorate or even demolished and replaced by garish malls and buildings.

When will we ever learn how rich we are in culture and history—when there's nothing left to preserve? Only when we are rich in interesting buildings, parks and churches. We have to cajole, coerce and convince our public officials to allocate some percentage of their "pork" to the maintenance and protection of these sites.

Imagine how many malls and commercial buildings is to visible in the 21st century, but, please, not at the expense of our heritage sites.

Enjoy safety and security at Manhattan Garden City

RESIDENTS can enjoy the best views within the Arcadia Garden Land relaxing furniture and fresh landscaping.

WHEN YOU BUY A CONDO UNIT, safety and security are two of your main concerns. While there is much research and experience in residential condominium developments, Megaworld Corporation salutes safety and security the top priority in its Manhattan Garden City.

Residents will experience a grand, safe welcome at the Manhattan grand transfer pavilion. It's a drive-shaped structure near Eastwood Mall that solves the main worry of most unit owners in Manhattan Garden City. It features a modern hotel-like lobby that gives an impressive sense of arrival.

Safety measures

"The property management office will surely come up with proven safety measures that will benefit our residents, including the elderly and the physically challenged," Megaworld General Properties Inc. president Anthony Charlemagne Yu promised.

The residents' safety has also been considered in the design of their access to both the LRT1 and RRT1. A 729-meter-pedestrian walkway connects the entire Manhattan Garden City at the fourth floor pedestrian level. Instead going down to the street level, they can avoid the busy stations and even the Araneta Center's main traffic. Currently, SM and 46 Mall.

"This spells peace of mind, especially for parents who invest units as and are eyeing the unit to be the residence of their college bound children. When they disembark the LRT, they don't have to go down to the street level. They can use the elevated walkways, reach the main, be pavilion, and then be safely home. It's like someone is looking over your shoulder to protect you," Megaworld Corporation says. Manhattan Garden City it features a modern hotel-like lobby that gives an impressive sense of arrival.

Amenities

The elevated garden walkway also allows residents to enjoy the views of the whole Araneta Center without being at street level. This unique feature opens up to the rail line features dotted by development, also hosts a wide array of amenities. Active group amenities are concentrated in the upper level, featuring jogging and swimming at the lap pools. Senior citizens amenities refer to activities for fun and relaxation like playground for the kids, adventure area for teens and barbecue pits and picnic area for adults.

More passive amenities include chatting and interacting in the gazebo and sitting areas. Nearby dining activities are also within reach of residents. Those who want to just relax can watch the flowers gardening, reading a book in a quiet place, engaging in contemplation in the reflecting pond or walking barefoot on a reflexology path.

"This is a wide range of amenities which Manhattan Garden City residents will enjoy and can use anytime and are easily exclusive. Children can play in utmost security while adolescents can swim to their hearts delight in relative privacy," Yu stated.

Investors and homebuyers will also be glad to know that the whole Araneta Center is being prepared to handle floods of emergencies and highly-trained are the safety and security of its shoppers, residents and office workers.

Anti-terrorism drill

Just recently, the Araneta Center held an anti-terrorism drill in conjunction with the Quezon City government and the Philippine National Police. The drill simulated a terrorist threat. Police officers plus the police, fire and medical rescue teams on how to set in case of emergencies.

The results rose from the Big Bang and signaled the start of the BTS. Emergency actions were perfectly implemented, such as the use of proper exits and the immediate evacuation and treatment of those "injured."

Topmost priority

"Safety is always our topmost priority here at the Araneta Center," Araneta Security Force chief Jesse San Juan said. "We strive to ensure the everyone at the Araneta Center feels secure." In addition, 101 and false parcels and a roving night patrol help keep the Araneta Center safe and secure round the clock.

If you value the safety and security for your condo family, it is to your best interest to be linked with Manhattan Garden City has to offer. Visit the Manhattan Garden City showroom at the third level of Gateway Mall. You may also call 910-5555 or e-mail inquire@megaworldcorp.com for more information.

Giving ideal accommodation

From page B3-1

Suites and Pesla Mansions), The Malayan Plaza, a high-end serviced residence located in Diliman Center, Pasig City (in partnership with Singapore-based Malayan Investments Co. Inc.) and most recently, the Subic Holiday Villas, a leisure and retirement development located inside the Subic Bay Freeport Zone in Zambales (in partnership with owner and developer Sunland Properties Inc.).

Strategically located

"As one may notice, all the properties we manage are strategically located in fast growing business and upscale areas where our guests, composed mainly of business travelers and holiday makers, as well as expatriates on short- and extended assignments, do have stay," Bernas thus explained.

He noted that the Philippines' serviced residence and apartment sector has come a long way in a short span of time.

"The market is enjoying tremendous growth, carrying out a wider sweep within the broader hospitality industry. This is because of what they offer, an ideal accommodation solution as well as an excellent and affordable alternative to hotels. It's getting a well-managed and well-appointed apartment offers corporate executives the luxury of a junior suite at the price of a hotel room)," Bernardino explained using The Malayan Plaza as one excellent example.

Self-contained units

The 36-story residential condominium located at the corner of EDSA Avenue and Ortigas Center, offers 350 elegantly furnished, self-contained serviced residence units in studio, one-bedroom, and three-bedroom layout.

"At a per day rate starting at P3,000 (for a studio caperior unit), staying in The Malayan Plaza is indeed more attractive than most five-star hotels in Metro Manila," said Bernardino. He added that The Malayan Plaza currently registers a healthy 85 to 90 percent average occupancy rate.

He added that the main attraction of a serviced residence or apartment is its flexible rental period—instead of being bound by a minimum stay of one year, as with a lease, a rental rental house or condominium, the tenant is allowed to specify the length of occupancy.

"Variable term leasing offers a welcome option for our guests, particularly in the current business climate, which have to accommodate traveling executives who may need a unit for anything from a few days to several months and to whom an extended stay in a hotel room does not appeal," he explained.

Valuable feature

In terms of facilities, Bernardino explained that serviced residences like The Malayan Plaza provide private cooking and laundry facilities, a valuable feature not found in hotel accommodation.

He described that the guest rooms at The Malayan Plaza is in par with three Manila's finest five-star hotels as the building provides facilities such as the helipad, outdoor pool, state-of-the-art business center with secretarial services, function rooms and other special need services for corporate clients.

Leisure travelers, on the other hand, are also provided with facilities like a fully equipped fitness room, and mini-golf putting green.

"I strongly believe that the demand for serviced residences and apartments will continue to grow. Bolstered by a steadily growing arrival of tourists that already reached 2.6 million last year). And expect Quantum Residences and Subic to be in the forefront of providing developers the best package for their properties," the maestro promised.

Quantum Hotels and Resorts, whose corporate office is located at the Bellino Pacific Tower on Ayala Avenue, Makati also has a sales and development office in CNT Tower, Emerald Road, Ortigas Center.

Young families find first home at Raya Garden

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YOUNG COUPLES ARE DRIVEN today by meaningful goals for their family. Both husband and wife take on jobs and strive overtime to provide a comfortable lifestyle for themselves and their children. At the same time, they plan ahead to secure their future, investing on a property is one substantial and

With Corinthian Gardenvillas, a sprawling, Bali-inspired sanctuary in Parañaque City developed by DMCI Homes.

important plans, and most importantly, a house where all their dreams can finally unite.

Richard Chipeco one of those young urban professionals who wake up every day to face the various demands of the corporate world. But, he and his wife Aileen, and 3-year-old son Miguel.

First residents

The Chip family, in fact, holds the distinction of being the first residents of Raya Garden Condominium, a sprawling, Bali-inspired sanctuary in Parañaque City developed by DMCI Homes.

The newly-transferred residents are in very ideal for a start-up family. Richard's young brood is enjoying this exciting phase of their lives with other residents in the development. Every now and then, they would invite their new friends over for barbecue afternoons or even have some quiet time for entertaining their guests. There is also a kitchen, dining area and two spacious bedrooms—one for the couple and one for their toddler Miguel.

The family moved in last December 2006, and has since enjoyed their first affordable home. Located on the fifth level, their unit is always well-lit because of the building's corners which allow natural airflow and sunlight to flood the condos.

Location

"We chose Raya Garden because of the location," Richard said. "It is also very accessible to major business and commercial areas, including Ortigas where my office is, and Makati where my wife works. Instead of wasting hours on traffic, we get home on time to spend more time with our son," he added.

There are less than 40 units currently occupied by residents, as the emerging community is bonding very effectively with a lot of shared opportunities. Young couples similar to the Chips single professionals, young couples and start-up families.

Ceremonial turnover

During a recent event, Richard witnessed the turnover of Raya Gardens to a substantial turnover of homes from key officials of DMCI Homes.

Jesus Cerero, Customer Care Division director of DMCI Homes, said: "Before the client even sees his unit, the turnover group, which is under my division, comes in and inspects how the unit is finished according to the common specifications. After that, we schedule a date for the client to see the unit himself and once they give their approval, we schedule the turnover," Cerero explained.

More affordable units

"All our units are likewise more affordable because of the engineering solutions we have come up with. DMCI Construction Group, which is DMCI homes' affiliate company, has been in the industry for more than 30 years, so we have an advantage in terms of experience in building landmarks. Now, we're trying to accomplish the same in building homes and communities that respond to the needs and wants of the Filipino family," Cerero added.

For inquiries on Raya Garden, please call 885.3333 or check out www.dmciproperties.com.

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SM City opens Bacolod branch March 2

THE SM City Bacolod will bring shopping, dining and entertainment environment to the Western Visayas shoppers.

SM City Bacolod's Cinema has ultra-Blue glass bottom-like wall design and has cross lines which create a dramatic reflection on the floor.

THE WESTERN Visayas region will have its own version of the iconic Mall of Asia when SM City Bacolod opens its doors to the public on Friday. It is SM Prime Holdings' 36th mall project and will serve customers in the dynamic hub of trade, education and government in the region's business center.

Located on a 16-hectare property across Real Street, the 60,000-square meter mall will bring SM's shopping, leisure and entertainment experience to Bacolod City, as well as Negros Occidental and nearby provinces. Like the Mall of Asia, which has a spectacular view of scenic Manila Bay, SM City Bacolod is located in a waterfront area near the harbor of Guimaras Strait. The mall will give shoppers the added attraction of fresh air and a breathtaking view of the bay's waterway.

This single-level retail and entertainment center consists of two separate buildings connected by a bridgeway. Building 1, on the other hand, has the SM Department Store as its major anchor and includes the SM Hypermart, the cineplex, movie area, stores and restaurants, and outdoor dining areas.

New ideas

SM City Bacolod is a mall of many new amenities. A hidden gem highlights the architectural character of the whole structure, outlining the design of new buildings, and making it the first of its kind among SM malls. It welcomes visitors with a tiled grand façade with SM signages all around.

The mall's interiors are equally compelling...high ceilings and colorful murals inspired by Bacolod's world famous Masskara Festival and designed by popular director Ines Gibaja.

SM City Bacolod will have about 200 tenants, including SM students, fashion boutiques, shoe and home furnishings, and computer stores, aside from the hardware, it also has local and international fast food chains, food vendors and specialty restaurants. It will have major international and Manila-based brands, as well as homegrown retailers and restaurants.

Attraction

The mall's attractions include an al fresco dining area called the Hoka Hoka Bar, with its cafe of food favors, an entertainment for persons events, and a theater that can be converted as a venue for concerts, plays, product launches and conventions.

For customer convenience, SM City Bacolod has ample parking for 3,000 cars and 300 motorcycles. It also has two transport terminals, as well as a spacious lounge with a ferry ticket counter, waiting area, baggage counter, and full size cold showers.

The mall is also handicap-friendly with ramps, railings and elevators, as well as breastfeeding-friendly with a room for nursing mothers. Customer-friendly concerns like other SM malls, it also has a nursery, restroom and clinic for senior citizens, and is the only mall in Bacolod, which utilizes water, bio-wastes in all its main restrooms.

SM City Bacolod's designs were undertaken by Design Associates, design architect; PAV Consultants and Associates, architect of record; DA Manila and Associates, project manager; and Metro DS Construction and Development Corp.

ROMANCE is in full bloom at Portofino's Amore.

BRITTANY president Jing Serrano leads the spiritwoman behind Portofino's Amore.

Amore: Brittany's new enclave at Portofino

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WHEN MAVERICK REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER Brittany Corp. builds, it goes all the way. Its famed master-planned communities are a testament to its commitment to greatness from the ground up. Guided by imagination, inspiration and seamless vision, Brittany builds with the future in mind.

Rebuilding 300 hectares of land on Las Piñas-Cavite-Laguna Alternative Link Road, the result is a unique masterfully planned community that is unprecedented in terms of concept.

Sculpting the property name by name, Brittany created Portofino, an inspired development that combines Italian esthetics with Filipino sensibilities. Cobble-stoned paths, sun-drenched colors, cupolas and balconies dominate the landscape that conjures lush vistas so that easy town worlds apart but are surprisingly similar.

11-hectares enclave

At the heart of the Portofino development is a newly opened 11-hectare enclave that is Amore. Amore of Portofino makes concrete all the attributes of love with lots of 'I more loves' – including the master 'I more concepts', a nice surprise, lovely, willing nooks crafted by trees and can easily be accessed through three major road arteries. Within, to walk like a paradise that truly speaks the language of love and passion.

'Amore is about a deep sense of commitment to family. It is also about romance and passion. It believes in celebrating life every single second and ensuring that the beauty of the soul is reflected in everything that surrounds the body. These are the core values that are surprisingly both very Italian and very Filipino. And this, we are proud to say, is very 'Portofino'' enthused Jing Serrano, president of Brittany Corp.

Architectural details

Amore distinguishes itself from the other Portofino properties through its architectural details. The cupola, among others, is unique because it is the only one, while the cupolas in the Courtyards of Portofino are circular.

Another unique feature of Amore would be the clusters – six assemblage of four single-detached residential units with a common paved driveway and a landscaped garden in front. The clusters offer further exclusivity in an enclave that is already extremely secure. Although a part of the Portofino development and its security system, Amore also has its own perimeter fence for added protection.

In February, Amore of Portofino offers five model units to accommodate the varied requirements and tastes of clients with floor areas ranging from 139 sq m to 238 sq m and price ranges ranging from the mid P8.7 million to P21 million. In February, buyers opened Tuscia, a 204-square-meter Tuscan-inspired model home.

Simply a love affair

'Amore is simply a love affair with the soul,' Serrano explained. 'It exemplifies what we have all along been envisioning in all our developments in Portofino, that is, the romance and emotion of Italian living, and since this is what Portofino is to us, it comes to be naturally for us to propose to Amore – our latest expression of love and passion in a property development. As reflected in our track record, we have a knack for pushing the envelope further and Amore is another such example.' The impressive track record includes Portofino Heights, Portofino South and the highly successful Courtyards of Portofino.

'We have always reiterated that the house is not just four walls and a roof. It is a sanctuary, a place of peace, a home for loved ones to share. At Portofino, every home is a masterpiece. Each one was the result of our commitment to providing the highest possible quality of living combined with our passion for life, love and family. The Portofino development is exactly how people should live and we are honored that Brittany Corp. has turned it into a reality. We've been told that home is where the heart is. The Portofino development, I believe, has captured the hearts of its residents. Truly, it is where the heart has found a home,' Serrano added.

For inquiries and property previews, please call [illegible] or [illegible].

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Check this section every other Saturday for the latest SM Advantage promos and highlights

The Anointed One

In an industry teeming with pretty boys handpicked to become the next matinee idol regardless of the lack of talent, Ping Medina stands out—as a beacon of hope and the future face of Philippine cinema

By Pepe Pacoy

THE TRUTH IS, HE'S PRETTY now. Not Pinoy Fotonad pretty or Sam Milby pretty. Genty pretty.

Oddly pretty to tattooed punks, an old diva and movie-ers and movie-ers.

But being pretty is the last thing on Ping Medina's mind. The 23-year-old, whose first acting job was as the young Jose Rizal in the Nicolas Urdaneta Film, knows bigger things to care about. Things like his Cinemalaya project with Dennis Marasigan—an ensemble film called "Taboo," in which he would star with Ricky Davao, Lucky Aquino, Soliman Cruz, Gina Alajar and others. Things like playing the golden soul-wrestling-a-demon role he found in Hello Elbie. Things like figuring out the real role in Philippine cinema.

Ping has been in the industry for 10 years now and although small roles and periodical shows are not part of his timeline, he does have a huge fan base. Actually, he has two kinds—the first made up of people who found him as Kenji's boy in Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros and the second are the people who have seen him on television, as shown the Peter to end the afternoon soap Dahil sa Isang Halik, both aired on GMA 7. He gets recognized when he's out and is asked to pose for photos and sign autographs but Ping finds a deeper connection with fans who let him really talk to about his work and about his passions.

And he has a lot of passion for his craft. "It's the thought of creating something on your own without the external powers, without the external hands."

Although he has dealt with being compared to his dad, the actor Pen Medina, he admits life. Things are starting to change now.

"I can't blame people, we look alike, parehas pa kami ng gupit. Gabi-gabi, naiiiyak ako minsan pag napapanood, naisip ko pa rin yun. But now people like him and say, 'Uy, may magaling sinasabi.' He's proud of me."

Unlike many people scrambling for stardom, Ping's presence in the world of film isn't about making money. "My goal is to have a consistent output of good movies. I want to be consistently good, maybe sometimes great... if that happens. But I'll be happy with good."

Although he's found more fulfillment with indie work, he has no problems doing mainstream movies, "As long as the script is good. Ambangan maganda, mainstream or not."

And when the right projects come, Ping is guided by his principles. "I would only stop if I don't believe in what the film stands for or what is your but otherwise, I'd just go go go."

We call him on a Wednesday night and tell him we'd like to shoot him to Elbie the next day—without clothes. "Yay." he said simply. He what we asked wasn't a big deal. It came almost as a shock—no negotiations, no hesitation, no uptight managers to deal with. He really is the opposite of everything spoiled.

It is this attitude coupled with his latest ideals and principles that set Ping apart from a lot of other actors. And it's not a consensus lifted by him—it's just him being him without trying. "If there's something I'm not comfortable with, I'll tell them. I'm also aware that every film we do really, am I not doing the same thing three million times?

The very same words will carry Ping through in his future beyond acting. He intends to write screenplays, produce and direct films as well.

That's all him in this country's God Damn Barrel. Three of him in the next block of every pesky boy who can't act to save his ass. Think of him as the anointed one. We do.

Ping Medina

THE THING about fame is that people instantly listen to what you say, no matter with your words.

The thing I love most about what I do is I get to play other characters and meet with new kind stories my way. I hate repeating myself.

People might be surprised to know that I'm a late bloomer. My first love wasn't until two weeks before my 20th birthday.

The most important thing I've ever learned in life is a temporary success won't be belonging of the glory and victory and a supposed failure won't even go so far.

I once when I started off I've been told to not my colleagues the potential friendships, instead of just people I have ever to work with.

The best thing that ever happened to me was that I found out why this emotional vampire monster. Slowly but slowly I was.

And what this taught to me was as much as I'm not the type of person to like that you simply have to go through. I would ensure that same circumstances again in many.

The worst to happened to not acting for 5. Truth and beauty. Sounds like film school, right?

My last ever outfit consisted of my fashion essentials, yellow Havaianas tsinelas and comfortable jeans.

My favorite hangout is my condo at Serendra with a view of the mountains, sipping on coffee close to me, just talking or watching good friends.

The soundtrack to my life would be Elton Party – This moment I am.

If I was invisible for a day, I would hang out in the White House. I want to know all the dirt!

The thing that makes me cancel angry is misguided passion. It can hurt people.

If I was the most powerful person on earth, I would have all the world leaders handshake and square them with Sprite (get one if you are a reader). KTT pro-cloning engineer).

The last thing about beauty is that no one is dysfunctional in their own way.

When I'm gone, they'll probably say

Photographs: ERIK VILLA
Design: ERIC DAVID MILAN

'Imahe Nasyon' is a beautiful mess—then again, so are we

Super! talks to Jon Red and Milo Paz both award-winning filmmakers and collaborators in "Imahe Nasyon," an omnibus film featuring 20 shorts that answer the question, 'What happened to us after 1986?'

By Pepe Diokno

A MOVIE SEGMENT ON MIL-LION a few days ago is made for the Philippine cinema. It's a local high school setting, students question about the 1986 Edsa Revolution. One question was, "What happened in Edsa?" Answers varied from, "I forgot," to, "I only." Another question was, "Why did the Edsa Revolution happen?" A response to answer was, "Because they didn't like their parents' dad."

This week, we commemorate the biggest event in our country's modern history, and it seems like no one remembers what it is. The 1986 triumph of peace and democracy over tyranny and corruption has now become, "crickets."

What is up with us? Twenty-one years after Filipinos united in order to purge a hardened 21-year dictatorship, and where are we? This is the question museum of the country's most recognized filmmakers got together to ponder over. Their answer: twenty unique short films, collectively shown under the title 'Imahe Nasyon.'

'Imahe Nasyon' translates to "image of the nation." What does that image look like? Well, it's a hodgepodge. Among "Imahe Nasyon's" many stories, narratives and works of video are in a wide range of styles told through the perspectives of a wide range of directors. There are experimental films, narrative, and feature, a science fiction one, and the profound types. There are good films, there are gems, and there are one or two that are utter crap. (Which ones will vary from audience member to audience member.)

When different subjects and artistic

Milo: I was still studying at the UP College of Mass Communication. I remember going to Edsa with my classmates in Ruby Let's on spending our weekdays.

For you, what happened in Edsa?

Jon: Edsa. I was about people, of different backgrounds, coming together to reach a seemingly impossible objective, then winning the goal then peaceful means.

Milo: Edsa 1 is basically getting back our freedom, democratic space we have now. Economic progress is useless without this freedom.

Considering what we're going through now, do you think people have forgotten this?

Milo: The existence of Edsa is all about in these areas of some people have forgotten. It's just really hard to remember the essence of Edsa when people have empty stomachs.

Many people are starting to look back at the Marcos years and see it as a time much better than now. Do you think there is such a sentiment?

Jon: I am aware of such a sentiment. But it is not rational for people to make assessments based on their present situation. We must also have faith in Edsa, the tendency is to compare and put down the present administration.

Meaning, one of the opportunity to necessary and important. But the fact that there can be discussed openly is already a big positive way from where we were during the Marcos dictatorship.

Milo: There will always be people who will say that the Marcos years are much better. But they seem to forget that our freedom was cannot be compared to whatever "better times" we had under the Marcos dictatorship.

Most college-age kids now were born after 1986. Do you find a disconnect between the generation that went through the dictatorship, and the generation that was born after Ferdinand Marcos was removed?

Jon: Yes there is a disconnection. That it becomes important for the experiences of the previous generation are shared with—and passed on, firsthand—to the next generation, which have to own history in turn.

Milo: There are two distinct generations but they are bound by the efforts of Edsa 1, which is basically the source of freedom that we gained after 20 years of the Marcos dictatorship.

Those who experienced Edsa 1 should always find ways and means to help the younger generation remember—why it happened and what happened after.

Jon: Yes, it is both an opportunity and a duty. You never know when people are capable of such challenges are placed before them. But Imahe Nasyon was meant for people of all ages. It should serve for us [illegible] to open one's mind to more progressive ideas.

Milo: I think they can still read into the subject of the film—due to their "EDT" sense of visual literacy. the younger generation are more exposed to the non-linear mode of storytelling in the video/post-production era—approximately a louder tone evoking into the subject.

What do you think one's responsibility is as a Filipino/filmmaker?

Milo: The Filipino filmmaker will always have the social responsibility to reflect on his time. Without this things that happen in our society. You can do this even if you're doing the most commercials.

Jon: I don't believe we can set a general rule. Each filmmaker will have to determine his or her own goals and responsibilities, depending on his or her capabilities, interests and inspirational. Some try to reach, educate and influence the widest possible number of people. Some experiment and make personal statements for intimate films. Finding an audience, no matter how small, is important.

What is the image of our nation?

Milo: After Edsa 1, it's really been downhill since 1986. We failed to make the most of the gains of Edsa 1. Philippine politics has a way of always reverting to "only based and spoiling everything. Maybe we are getting impatient. And an effort Edsa 1 not for all.

Jon: No matter how I try, there is no single answer. Each one of us will have his own answer. And if you're curious to find out the answers of some of our best filmmakers, then watch "Imahe Nasyon."

"Imahe Nasyon" features short films by Jon Red, Milo Paz, Dennis Marasigan, Dondon Santos, Jeffrey Jeturian, Mes de Guzman, Ron Lee, Topel Lee, Mike Tan, Robert Quadrad, Allen Aguirre, Ang-mo Yeo, B.J. Rosete, Lyle Sarte, JC Subido, Ilyn Sanchez, Jhorah Empelmadu, Gil Saguisag and Paolo Villaluna.

It is showing at Robinsons Galleria beginning [illegible] 28.

One thing or the other

'I Am Super!' awardee Lex Ledesma introduces a cool, new school, Ovvian Castrillo showcases her sculptures in her first one woman exhibit and I'm about to go back to school. Ladies and gents, it's time for a revolution

YOU ARE "THE ONE." Lex Ledesma invites you to join The One School

Tim Yap

OURS IS A GENERATION that's nurturing of the next. We believe in passing on the torch and not carrying it until we get to our graves.

We don't just settle for holding the torch, we make sure that we incessantly add fuel to the fire and make sure it's burning bright.

This, in contrast to the "old school" of thinking. GQ's Charlie Parrer has this to say about this ancient mindset. "They say that whatever's seen is a paradox of their own glory days. Nothing is as good as it was in their own time. And because it's over for them, they talk as though it should be over for everyone."

Well, I say it isn't over 'til it's over. The Super! generation embraces the now, the now and be now—and that is why... I'm going back to school!

Yes, the (hell) proud of 30-30-ers (?) (if 3.30 p.m. will be part of my daily schedule as I open myself (once again) to the rigors of academia). The next time I bump into someone and they ask me where I just came from, the answer will not be "Uh, from some office just up." I'll blurt it out loud, "I just came from school!" Knowledge may yet be this generation's best ally.

One passion

Mr. shouldn't stop learning, no matter what age. Anytime is the best time to increase our brain size. Speaking of nurturing the next generation, "I Am Super! awardee Lex Ledesma is one such guy. I do his inspiration from where it comes to his belief in the talents of the next generation. His entrepreneurial skills have inspired his students, who have set up, 12 schools and non-traditional event companies and other innovative businesses that started with just ONE thing... their passion.

This passion for searching out one's potential has led Lex to open up The One School — a non-traditional entrepreneurship college in BGBC Plaza, which espouses the Kindness Method, an educational philosophy which has been used in elite DS schools since the 1930's.

I've been privy to Lex's out-of-the-box views on education, and I salute this man for his vision. He goes as far as being with his students' parents' homes to get to know them better, to fully understand their needs. Think of it as enrolling in a school where you get not only a principals' professor, but a surrogate parent (not an obnoxious one) who would really nurture your growth—he's that type of a mentor. I am continuously learning from his enthusiastic wisdom. "Each is encouraged to find their own 'true and dance to it with pride. When young people are encouraged to find themselves and create businesses around their personal passions, it is truly a site to behold. The One School is different... indeed—it is a place where students become one with themselves," beams Lex, as he tossed me around their campus.

In The One School, students really look forward to attending classes (no one feigns fever or worries signal number three arrives) as their primary principles because on model classrooms and round table discussions (as opposed to lectures)—makes it more fun, engaging, effective and fun...similar to how the philosophers back in the day did it.

Interested? Call The One School. And Sue 667-2839 or check out www.theoneschool.org.

Ovvian Castrillo, sculptor

While we're on the topic of innovation, check out the first one-woman sculpture show of artist and designer Ovvian Castrillo ongoing till the end of February at the lobby lounge Garden. Ovvian uses black iron and steel to translate her vision into breathtaking pieces of art that, just like the artist, never ceases to amaze us with her vitality.

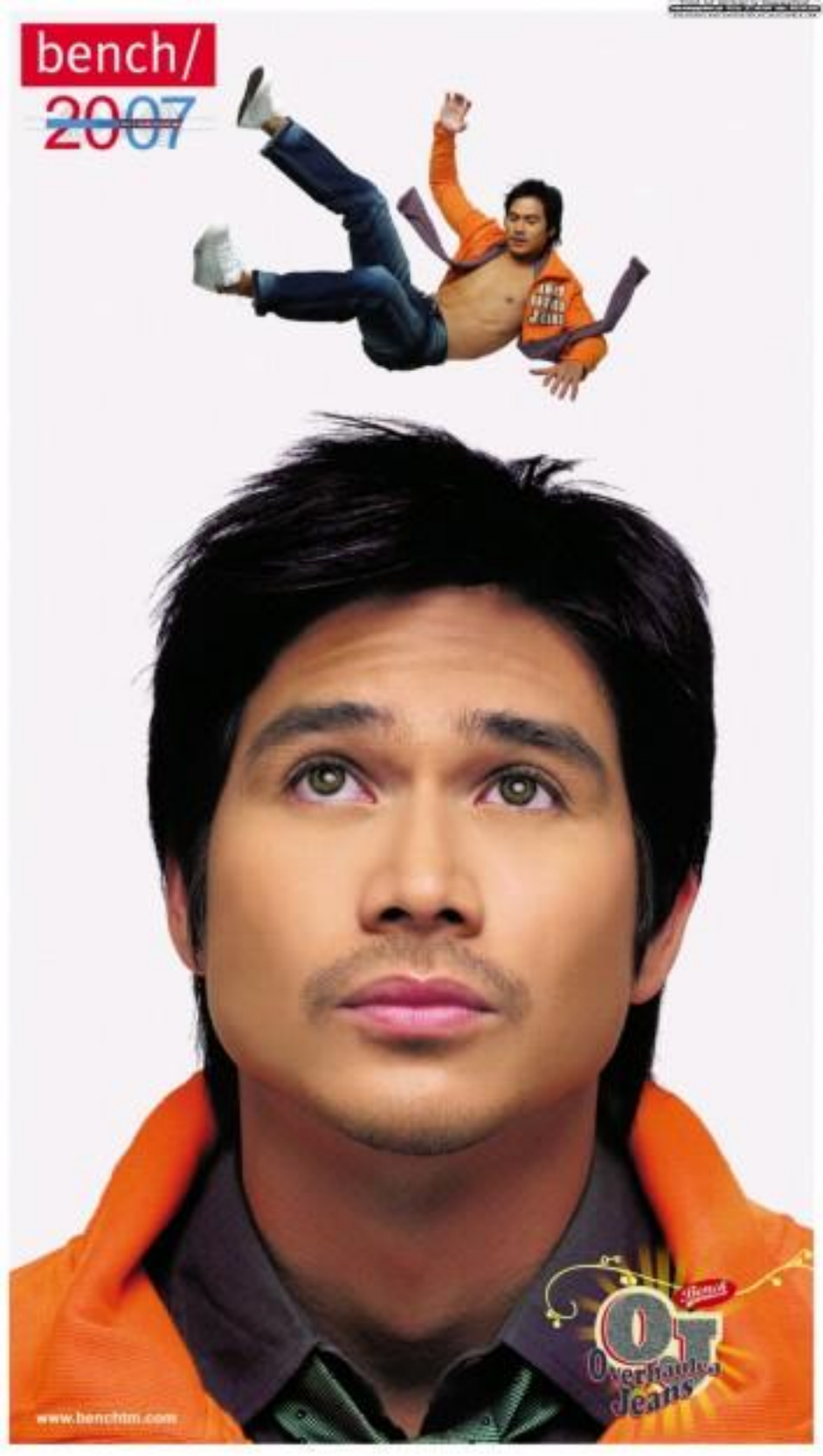
Says an expert and good friend Miguel Morales of Castrillo's work, "In her capable hands, the metals bend and twist, crack and curl, curl in, at times seemingly defying the laws of metals. Her dreams range from the organic to the abstract, simultaneously exploring and exploiting the strength of the materials she uses."

In last week's Super! space, our title read, "My brother is not a pig!" a quote I wrongly attributed to our former Miss International. The Hermosan stylist outside the Super! headquarters to tell me that the above-mentioned quote was uttered by Ate Guy in Mikey Bustos' Gabo Gamo. I stand corrected. Thank you, Sir Ricky Lo.

To the cyberi that were outraged by the misquote, "Please do not judge me..." for as Michelle Mezquita (and now I'm sure of this) said, "I am not a freak."

MY BROTHER IS NOT A PIG ... But his Swatch is! For more lols, Super! says—get this Swatch, stat! stat!

OVVIAN Castrillo's sculptures boldly display individuality and strength. Check it out till the end of this month at the Lobby Lounge of the Makati Shangri-la.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SATURDAY Special

Editor Nestor U. Torre • Assistant Editor Rita P. Avila

The short and tragic life of Anna Nicole Smith

By Nestor U. Torre

IN THE COURSE OF HER ALL TOO BRIEF life, Hollywood vixie and scandal magnet Anna Nicole Smith was consumed by many seemingly contradictions.

She wanted cast as a stripper and "poor man's Marilyn Monroe" wannabe. Then, she upped and married the exceedingly wealthy J. Howard Marshall, who was old enough to be her grandfather.

Financial arrangement

Most everyone "knew" that the marriage was a financial arrangement. So, when the old man died a few years after, they expected Smith to end up in a very rich young woman.

—Well, over his family members' dissolved! They lobbed the "gold-digger" Anna Nicole with a vengeance, and made it extraordinarily difficult for her to get her "claws" on his millions.

Even after she finally became incredibly wealthy, difficulty and even tragedy continued to hound Smith. She sometimes looked troubled when she appeared in public, as pro-pic-ture-perfect that she was high on drugs.

She became a vicious national and even global joke, the signature epitome of a cheap market gone bad and very wrong. As she made corpse-of-the-month (in public, the world tuned in, confirmed and reinforced. There could be one: that hope not relevant to for this beautiful but pathetic drug-addicted and confused woman!

Then, last year, the cheap joke who was Anna Nicole Smith suddenly found tragic when her son, Daniel, died only a few days after she had given birth to her youngest child.

The suddenness of his passing, and the cruelty of juxtaposition of birth and death within the same week, jolted the world into a shocked recognition. Nobody was giggling now, and everybody was trying to understand the cruelest significance of what had just happened to Smith.

Inconceivable

For her part, Anna Nicole was inconsolable at the untimely loss of her son's death, even as she failed to be a good mother to her newly born daughter.

Everyone's heart went out to her—until the renewed grunting noises and crushed-out intervals that were blamed pollen into shallow.

This situation got even stickier when nearly old boyfriends started crawling out of the woodwork, each one of them claiming paternity of Smith's child.

Was it betrayed paranoid love that propelled them? Not having been born yesterday, most everyone suspected that the mother and child's mega-millions may have had something to do with it.

SMITH: Mastering montage of tragic twists and ironies.

Then, everything hit rock bottom when, some days ago, Anna Nicole herself suddenly died, in a shocking end to what was a dark but ironic life. Were the perils of tragedy so spawned out overdrive and hell-bent on her that it? It was too much for our family to take—and the world itself had a pretty rough time absorbing the maddening montage of tragic twists and ironies, as well.

Respite

Everyone needs a respite from so much unpalatable pain...and we don't mean a vacation to the Bahamas! All parties involved or belatedly jumping onto the bottom's bandwagon, cool it, please. Let the universe assimilate many new and positive stories, before the next story comes to us as reality!

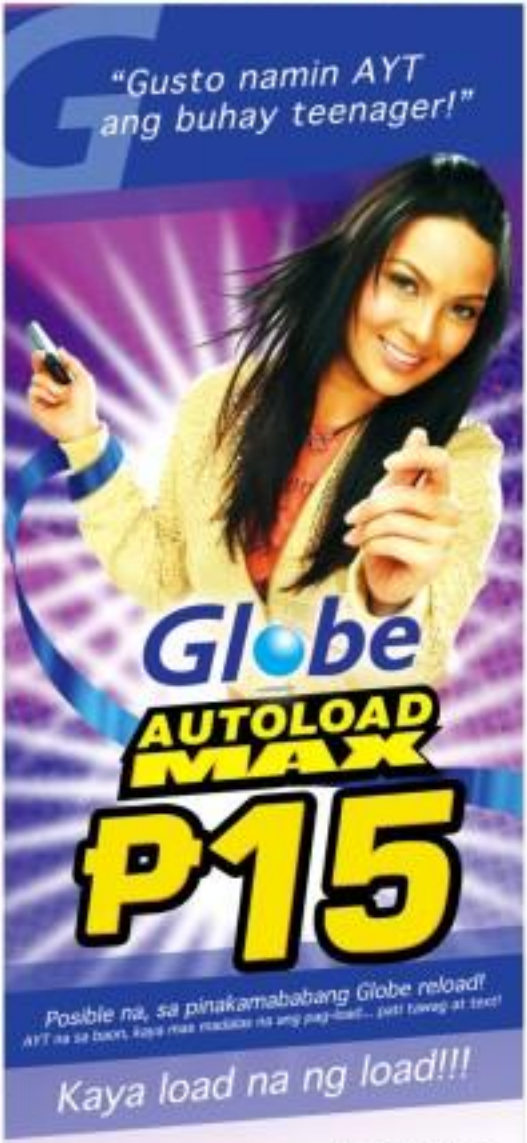
Sadly, we aren't even going to get that privilege wish. This week, even more paternity claimers have stepped forward to claim paternity of poor Anna Nicole's orphaned daughter!

As for Anna Nicole herself, she can't even rest in peace just yet, due to a beneficiary court order that commands her body to make itself available for unsolicited DNA test!

Alas, poor Euripides, Shakespeare, Poe, Jacinto, Manuel—here is your injustice make, because they have effectively been updated and weekend programs by Anna Nicole's afterlife-super-tragic life and death.

In the face of such tragedy, perhaps the fickle finger of fate, what are we to do? Can we hope to salvage even an iota of sense and meaning from such awesome grotesqueries? And, when will Anna Nicole finally be able to rest in peace?

God, grant her peace.



TV ratings figures analyzed

By Nestor U. Torre

GMA-7's RECENT RATINGS RE-port shows that, as of January 2007, the channel was covering 17.3 for Mega Manila, as opposed to ABS-CBN's 14.1. What about the presidential figures? We trust that they will soon be forthcoming.

The report lists 13 GMA-7 shows in the Top 20, including the first three—"Saint Thomas," "Captain Barbell," "24 Oras" and "Valentina." The first ABS-CBN show to make the list, at No. 5, is "Sana Maulit Muli."

At No. 6 and 7 are GMA-7's "Sabrina" and "Sabrinajan," followed by three ABS-CBN programs—"Super Inggo," "Dyesebel Sa Dagat" and "Maging Sino Ka Man."

Variety

Senior on the Top 20 list of the most popular shows are drama and variety series, many of them of the homey variety. This indicates that the program crowd isn't about to go crazy just yet, that's for sure.

That's unfortunate, since the homestaying kid has adversely limited local viewing options, with some three to four primetime hours nightly reserved for pretty much the same thing...imported, escapist entertainment.

Noted "Binondo" is currently king of the TV hill, more probably because it's just started inboarding, so viewers are curious about the new kid on the TV block.

LOCKIN. Her action-adventure series with Robin Padilla is currently King of the TV hill.

The other top series are close to and, as the "Sunod-Sunod" will surely depend on how their replacements (for instance, "Marie Antoinette" and "Super Twins") pan out.

Unusual achievement

Also noteworthy is the strong showing of No. 3 of the GMA newcomer, "24 Oras." This is an unusual achievement for a news program, and indicates how effectively the show has "popularized" the news, for good or for bad.

"Imbestigador" at No. 7 is another impressive feat, since the show is a docu-magazine program, otherwise

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GB1 1 EPIC MOVIE 2 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
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ACC 1 GHOST RIDER 2 MUSIC & LYRICS 3 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER 4 BLOOD & CHOCOLATE
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NOW SHOWING

Reality and fantasy collide in Jim Carrey's latest mindbender

By Rito P. Asilo

"The Number 23"
D—Joel Schumacher
S—Jim Carrey, Virginia Madsen

IS MARC FORSTER'S DELIGHTFUL "Stranger Than Fiction," Will Ferrell plays an IRS agent who discovers that he's a fictional character in a novel being written by a literary recluse (played by Emma Thompson).

Interestingly, Jim Carrey's character, Walter Sparrow, in Joel Schumacher's splashy dramedy/mindbender suffers almost the same fate.

Soon after the kind dispatches receives an old book from his wife, Agatha (Virginia Madsen), on his birthday, he becomes enamored that the story of the book's protagonist is based on his life! But, the novel ends on shaggy 23—and the bad character has the same birthday! What gives!

He savors from his sketchy past start to unravel. Walter's obsessive obsession for the book's intriguing characters—from Lawyer-Haggling and the Suicide Blonde to the sexually adventurous Jerome Avatar, Sakkido—begins to consume him, and soon reveals clue of his youth that his mind has blocked off for 11 years!

And, strangely enough, anything seems to add up to the number 23! Every successive puzzle piece seems to fit into his otherwise mundane life—except that the fictional detective in the book actually turns out to be a killer, which Walter is not! Or, is he? Are his fears merely the delusional ravings of a delirious mind?

Schumacher lacks the directorial vision and expositional skills of Kenter, Darren Aronofsky or Christopher Nolan, but his ability to constantly deliver unconventional but accessible movies is not to be discounted.

With the unique, numbers-based direction he utilizes to squeeze personal, philosophical, historical, and even biblical details, Mr. "numerical" pause, while sometimes overindulgent, becomes fodder for intrigue—and thrilling entertainment.

Carrey's increasing

TV . . .

From page D1

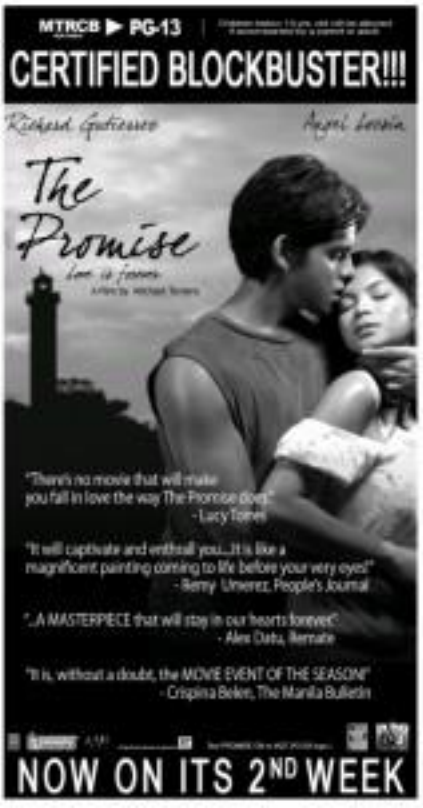
that channel, usually saw high-scale viewers.

Finally, "Deal or No Deal" is the only game show in the Top 20 (and the Top 20, for that matter). It, too, is about to wind up its affairs, on the outcome of the ratings race for the next TV quarter is soon many up in the air.

From No. 11 to 30, the shows on all Blacks GMA-7 shows: the magazine program, "Bayani Ko, Jessica Soho"; Kwentoverse, "A Star Life" and "Barang", singing fit, "Pinoy Pop Superstar"; newsmine program, "Iat Balaga," and evening Sunday variety show, "Mel & Joey."

ABS-CBN follows with the drama anthology, "Maalaala Mo Kaya," the crime documentary, "SOCO," and the newscast, "TV Patrol World." And, No. 20 goes to GMA-7's

CARREY. Though versatile...



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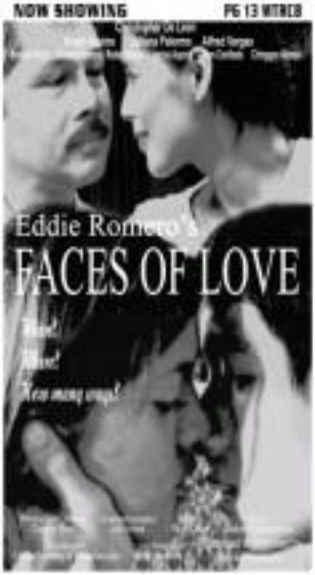

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SM MALL 5

1	EPIC MOVIE	2	GHOST RIDER	3	NUMBER 23
4	THE PROMISE	5	BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA		

IMAX 3D

STREET SMART

Mandy Navarro

An inter-continental romance

ROMAN RIMAN (mail) was born in Bicol in 1977, and grew up in Texas. He has a Film Production degree from New York University and is currently a video producer in the Big Apple. RR is the son of Marites and Uncle Romeo Jimale.

In 2001, while on a film assignment to MANILA, RR met Celva Rose Argawa, Miss Camiller Quezon 2001, the only child of Mayor Rodolfo Boie Quijada.

Holiday

Because RR and Miss Celva documents of his migrant, their communication was limited to e-mails. It wasn't until RR joined his family on a Christmas holiday in Australia and New Zealand in Nov. 2004 that the couple "discovered" each other.

RR returned in April, saw on May's birthday in February the following year, and then went to New York for RR's birthday two months later.

THE LOVE LIFE. Star-crossed beat is and souls.

RR finally proposed marriage on Dec. 27 that year. In February last year, RR flew to Sydney to ask for her hand in marriage.

On RR's 29th birthday last April 22, the pair tied the knot in New York. RR and Miss' second church wedding in Manila, which took place last Dec. 28.

The newlyweds currently reside in their newly-purchased condominium unit in Manhattan.

• • •

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Email mandy-navarro@yahoo.com

TV. . .

Pressmeup D4

what do you know...it's racing higher than its previous rate. GMA-7 rival, "Magpakailanman," is a small victory there.

Clearly, however, MBS-CBN has its work cut out for it to catching up with the new Startimes. GMA-7 Perhaps this is the best time to do that, since many top-selling shows are ending, so the ratings could go either way (for now) between the two leading channel's replacement shows.

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GALLERIA

1 ASK THE DUST • THX	6 THE NUMBER 23
2 GHOST RIDER	7 TROMA
3 indieSine: IMAHE Nasyon	8 MUSIC and LYRICS
4 BRIDGE of TERABITHIA	9 THE PROMISE / THE MESSENGERS
5 EPIC MOVIE	10 FACES of LOVE

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ERMITA

1 THE NUMBER 23	
2 THE MESSENGERS / MUSIC and LYRICS	5 EPIC MOVIE
3 BRIDGE of TERABITHIA	6 GHOST RIDER
4 FACES of LOVE	7 THE PROMISE

METRO EAST

1 THE NUMBER 23	5 THE MESSENGERS
2 GHOST RIDER	6 BRIDGE of TERABITHIA
3 ROMEO and JULIET	7 EPIC MOVIE
4 THE PROMISE	8 THE FOUNTAIN / MUSIC and LYRICS

Romeo and Juliet
FEBRUARY 21 to 27
Robinsons MoviesWorld METRO EAST

NOVALICHES

1 GHOST RIDER	3 BRIDGE of TERABITHIA
2 EPIC MOVIE	4 TROMA
	5 THE PROMISE

PIONEER

1 EPIC MOVIE	3 THE NUMBER 23
2 GHOST RIDER	4 BRIDGE of TERABITHIA

STA. ROSA

1 GHOST RIDER
2 EPIC MOVIE
3 THE HOLIDAY
4 THE PROMISE

LIPA

1 APOCALYPTO
2 THE PROMISE
3 THE HOLIDAY
4 THE MESSENGERS
5 NIGHT at the MUSEUM

DASMARIÑAS

1 THE FOUNTAIN
2 LITTLE CHILDREN
3 GHOST RIDER
4 THE PROMISE

ANGELES

1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 BAGEL
4 THE CLEANER

IMUS

1 LITTLE CHILDREN
2 THE PROMISE
3 TROMA
4 GHOST RIDER
5 HANNIBAL RISING
6 EPIC MOVIE

STARMILLS

1 HANNIBAL RISING
2 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
3 THE PROMISE
4 LITTLE CHILDREN
5 BABEL
6 GHOST RIDER

BACOLOD

1 GHOST RIDER
2 APOCALYPTO
3 The CURSE of the GOLDEN FLOWER
4 THE PROMISE
5 TROMA
6 THE HOLIDAY

ILOILO

1 GHOST RIDER
2 THE PROMISE
3 The CURSE of the GOLDEN FLOWER
4 APOCALYPTO
5 THE MESSENGERS
6 ARTHUR and the INVISIBLES

Gish's lasting legacy remembered

By Rohn Cervantes

I SWITCHED ON THE TELEVISION set early one morning. The station was showing "Duel in the Sun," directed and starred to by Man Ahh, with co-stars Michelle Phillips and Michael Gates.

Not a bad cast, I thought. When the opening credits rolled and I saw "and Miss Lillian Gish" on the screen, I was hooked.

I have long been a fan of Lillian Gish. Early on, I had admired her in films like "The Cabinet," Victorian Silent's 1955 psychological drama starring Michael Redgrave, Leueen Bacall, Gloria Grahame and Gish. She made her first film in 1912.

Quiet strength

I was in awe of her quiet strength and subtle approach to acting—she was quite a contrast to the diva's I'd seen in talentions. When she played a pivotal role in Charles Laughton's sole directorial attempt, "The Night of the Hunter," I was floored by her spiritual aura. In my book, Laughton's thriller about a deranged minister chasing two innocent kids is one of the most suspenseful films I have ever seen.

Besides various about Texas, Gish's other film era dedicate

Gish: Had artistic control over her films.

sizeable portions to D.W. Griffith's admiration for Gish, Lillian and her sister, Dorothy, had successful careers in Hollywood, but it was the former who became Griffith's favorite.

Meager income

The Griffith-sister acted to supplement the meager income of their family after their drifter father abandoned them. Three assistants mother turned the penny-pad into stage actresses. Lillian had a mind of her own, she required actress control over her films.

In the days when producers and directors held sway, Lillian demanded and got what she wanted. She was devoted to her mentor Griffith, but she admirably broke revolting relations with him over a salary dispute in the late 1920s.

Thereafter, she produced and starred in films like "La Bohème" and "Scarlet Letter."

Sister

In 1930, she directed her sister, Dorothy, in "Remoding Her Husband," while she starred in films produced by minor companies that allowed her to exercise artistic control over scripts and directors.

She chose directors like King Vidor and Victor Sjostrom over more commercial directors. Since she opted for artistry over commercial appeal, her films did not do well at the box office. So, with the entry of Greta Garbo, the studios dropped her as a "serious actress" in 1928.

Soon after, Lillian moved her luck on Hollywood and went back to her first love: the legitimate stage.

Lillian was active even in her 80s, and starred in "Sweet Liberty" in 1986. Alan Alda must be a Gish fan, she last film was 1987's "The Whales of August." She died at age 97 in 1993.

'Saan Nagtatago si Happiness?' at SM digital theaters March 7

"SAAN NAGTATAGO SI HAPPINESS?" is coming to the big screen at all SM Digital theaters nationwide starting March 7. A box-office hit in last year's Cinemalaya film festival, this light and breezy semi-musical rom-com-dy tackles man's clueless search for happiness in typical Pinoy fashion.

It stars veteran stage actor and singing champion, Sandy Seña, in the role of Filipo, an ex-convict resolute searching for his lost mother.

Sentiments

The movie was fashioned by junior Eddie Tuliscok, the father of local independent cinema, for supporting the sentiments and longings of ordinary Filipinos.

In fact, Tuliscok handed his special Bamboo Camera award to Mediamaximum's digital media.

Lending support to the all-round singer-comedian were veteran movie and television actors, Nicky Davao, Lee Salazar, Caridad Sanchez, Nanette Inventor, Boy Garcia, Neal Tiamsuankee, Antonio Isaac, "Little Big Man's" child sensation, Bibia Torres, and 2006 Singapore Film Fest best actor winner, Elijah Castillo.

Set in a decrepit urban tenement, the movie shows laughter about love, faith and the beauty of life despite the hard times.

As Boy explains: "The film is meant for the whole family. It can touch many hearts, but at the same time, its dramatic highlights will reach viewers' hearts."

THE MUSICAL-COMEDY was Cinemalaya's biggest-ever hit.

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ALL-NEW episodes of the animated adventure series

Film version of popular novel falters

By Nestlard Torre

BASED ON THE 1929 NOVEL OF THE same title by John Fante, the film, "Ask the Dust," has an impressive pedigree. Its source, though not a bestseller, has attained cult status in the years since its publication.

Director Robert Towne rediscovered the novel while he was writing "Chinatown," left it there with the material, and planned to turn it into a movie.

Goal

Now, after three decades, he has achieved his goal...but the question is: has he succeeded in converting this compelling piece of literature to film?

The proof, as they say, is in the pudding, and at first "taste," the film version seems very tasty. After all, what could be more appealing than a film written by Towne himself, starring two hot leads (Colin Farrell and Salma Hayek), and a beautifully shot setting?

All of these elements contribute to a nice surface gloss. But, as you get deeper into the movie, you realize that, despite the presence of talented people, things just don't seem to work.

Set in Depression-era Los Angeles, the film describes the "four days of determination" of one Arturo Bandini (Farrell), an aspiring writer, a second generation Italian-American, and a "lover of man and beast alike."

Proud, inexperienced, and angry with himself and the world, Bandini finds himself in the City of Dreams...trying to make his own dream of fame and fortune come true. There, he meets a girl, Camilla Lopez (Hayek), a waitress in a café where he goes to spend his last nickel.

Their relationship gets off to a strangely violent start, and they soon encounter a less-than wholesome life. It's soon as less a love story, though apparently the focus is different to the novel. The characters are complicated and difficult. Roles not really meant to like Bandini, but Towne makes the mistake of trying to make him likable.

Problem

Or perhaps, it's the actor's problem. Farrell doesn't really fit the role. He's not edgy enough, and he's the sort of actor who requires more physical action. He doesn't quite capture the inner turmoil of an artist raging with writer's block.

Hayek plays her usual "fiery" Mexican woman. The best performance in the film, in fact, belongs to Idina Menzel, who possesses all the passion that the other actors—and the movie, as a whole—lack.

'Avatar' specials

NICKELODEON RICES OFF ITS special programs for March with "The Legend So Far," a 12-minute Jump-On Special on Thursday, The Legend of Aang," at 5 p.m. on March 1, and 11 a.m. on March 3.

Flashback on the adventures throughout the avatar world on the way to the ultimate destination, the Northern Water Tribe.

A one-hour special, "The Siege of the Nation," takes viewers to the North Pole on March 10 at 11 a.m. and March 12 at 12:28 p.m. Plus, all-new episodes of "Avatar" will be released at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays starting March 17.

On March 11 at 7 and 10 a.m., there new episodes of "Sanjay Speed's" "sport-avatar" adventures with Stephanie and your favorite exotic superhero, Spartacus.

And "Nite Rite" also telecasts new movies at 12:30 and 7 p.m. every weekend beginning March 24.

'Salcedo Nights'

The UST Resurgent Bel-Air and the Seasons of Bel-Air present the Salcedo Nights concert series at 7 p.m. today at the Atrium Villanueva Park, Salcedo Village, Makati City.

Featured performers are the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, soprano Rachelle Sorsolia, and "Philippine Idol" finalists Jan Nieto and Gian Magdangal. With direction by Maestro Dagoy and musical direction by Jesse Lucas. Call 832-3894 or 899-6000.

'Viva Morales: Showgirl'

The repeat performance of the hit "Viva Morales: Showgirl" concert will be staged tonight at the Araneta Coliseum. Pop Quintos directs, and guests include Ogie Alcasid, Ai-Ai delas Alas, Rodjun Cruz, Jaya and Jay-R Siaboc. Call 911-5555.

Alexandra Torrescu

Romanian violinist Alexandra Torrescu pays tribute to Filipino violin greats, Ernesto Valdez, Gervasio Lucas, and Redentor Romero tonight at 6 at the Philamlife Theater. Call 908-5022.

'Espana Entonation'

Stella Philippines cups its 15th season with "Two Filipinos, Espana Entonation," a dance celebration that shows why Filipinos are regarded as the "Latin Americans of Southeast Asia." Choreographers include Inno Enriquez, Carmen "Mimi" Aldeza Laguardia, David Barnes and Annie Salvarosa. Performances are on March 2-4. Call 551-0222 or 832-1133 loc. 1405.

'Kabul Express'

Screenings of the film, "Kabul Express," at Robinsons Galleria have been moved to Feb. 28-March 6. Tickets dated Feb 21-27 are still valid.

'The Pursuit of Happyness'

Will Smith's exceptional movie, "The Pursuit of Happyness," will have sneak previews on Feb. 28 and 27 in selected theaters. Smith and his son, Jaden, have received lavish praise for their performances in the inspiring drama.

'Word of Mouth'

The Philippine Literary Arts Council holds "Word of Mouth," an evening of performed poetry, at 6:30 p.m. on Feb 27 at the UCP Main Gallery.

'Concert at the Park'

At 5 p.m. tomorrow, "Concert at the Park" at the Rizal Park open-air auditorium features classic dance groups: Quezon City Ballet, the Kinetic Dance Company of San Agustin, Iloilo, the UE Dance Troupe, the Phil. Ballet Rising Dance Troupe, and the Bayanihan, the Philippines' national folk dance troupe.

Movies on TV

On HBO, March 1 at 2:30 p.m., "Made in Heaven." March 2 at 4:30 p.m., "Archaeology Blues." March 3 at 6:30 a.m., "Rapha" March 4 at 8:35 a.m., "Tedious Children's."

On Cinemax, March 1 at 7 p.m., "Fueling Peace." March 2 at 9:15 a.m., "Rebel Without A Cause." 1:40 p.m., "Rifle" (1980). March 3 at 5:10 p.m., "The Stepford Wives." March 4 at 2 p.m., "Age Pupil."

SATURDAY Special

Eastwood reveals reverse image of war and heroism

By Rito P. Asilo

"LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA," CLINT EASTWOOD's superlative companion piece to his engaging war drama, "Flags of Our Fathers," returns us to the morality of war and man's commanding definitions of heroism: Is fighting for one's country always synonymous to dying for it?

This time, Eastwood observes a shift in perspective—the Japanese's—as his movie recounts how the unconventionally noncombatant General Kuribayashi (Ken Watanabe) and his vastly outnumbered men held off for 36 days the American invasion of Iwo Jima, the Japanese island that stood between the overwhelming American military force and Japan's main islands, by digging an astounding network of 16,000 caves and tunnels during World War II. (The Japanese soldiers were expected to hold out for no more than five days.)

Unnerving

While the film's blood-soaked images of carnage and bare-life make for an unnerving viewing experience, it's the stories of its Japanese characters that make the movie rise to dramatic heights—particularly that of baker-turned-soldier Saigo (Kazunari Ninomiya), whose desire to stay alive for his wife and newborn daughter outweighs his willingness to die for his country.

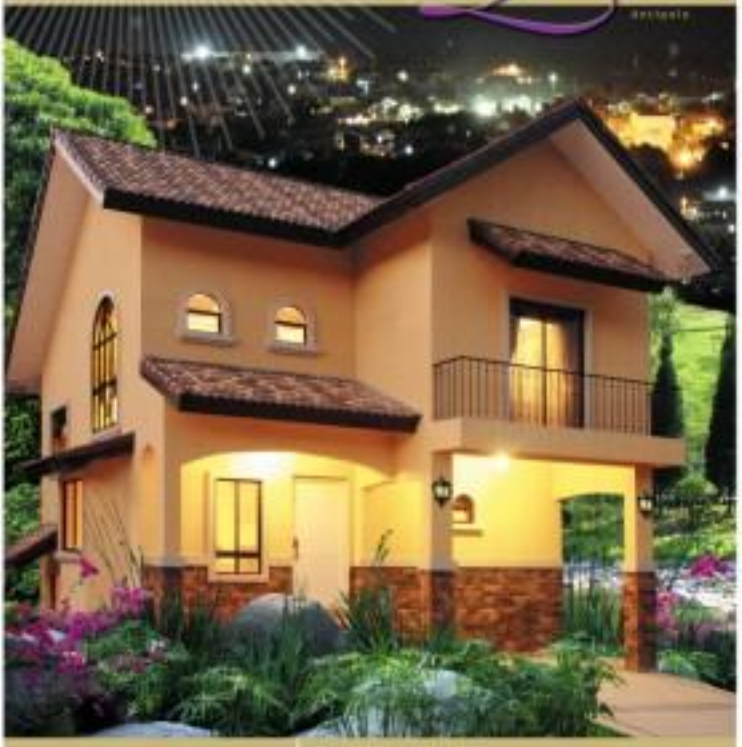
Their stories are strung together by the letters they send home (which are read from time to time as they await the invading American forces. Kuribayashi's homely, loving letters to his son and wife, for instance, are culled from a volume titled "Written Letters from Commander in Chief," found long after the annihilation of the Japanese imperial army.

EASTWOOD. One-two punch from the prolific director

Despite its lengthy running time, the film is EASTWOOD at its

Live Life at Greater Heights only at

Mille Luce



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How to get to Mille Luce:

Join us as we celebrate the blessing of our model unit "Unibriel", this Saturday, February 24 '07.

Show biz and politics do mix

By Nestor U. Torre

NOW THAT THE 2007 CAMPAIGN season has begun, quite a number of people and prospective voters have expressed their dismay at the number of show biz stars or personalities of entertainment backgrounds who have decided to run for public office.

What, they lament, is the country's political process coming to? —Well, nowhere much, really. It's (show) business as usual!

Plus factors

For it, in this country, show biz and politics do mix, and have done so for many decades—so, what's all the fuss and bother about? That they should is a question and a problem, but that they do is a fact...for the simple reason that electorates here are won partly (mainly?) by means of popularity and name recall—plus factors that show biz enjoys, without having to spend millions to create, as other politicians must.

Even before stars began to run for public office, they were hired by politicians (a) partners or appear at their rallies, and thus draw crowds for them.

After a while, the stars finally get cupped by this Ireland: Isn't 'from the Star. Hey, if I can make a politician win, why don't I run for office myself?—Why not, indeed?!

The first big case to inspire the high-public office was movie king Fernando Poe Jr., who made

GARFIELD BY JIM DAVIS

A. LIPIN BY JESS ABIERA

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT

PUGAD BABOY BY PH. LUIS CR.

MUTTS BY PATRICK MCDONNELL

ADVENTISTS BY ELIZABETH CHENGELO

ATOMO AND WEBBY BY LYN GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN MANLANG

BIRD MACHINE BY HANS ABIERA

MANDRAGORAS BY JOHNS TUAZO

TULOON BY PAPI LIMO TATUM PALAMBELING

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Venezuelan trade
6 Sticking stuff
10 Actress Rhyner
13 Tell tidbits
14 Tuff Kangaroo
15 Female deer
16 Hero of "The Iliad"
19 Unfaithful
20 Barry Levinson's Best Picture
21 Long-legged seabird
22 "Who Smuggled Hadley"
24 Public upheld
27 The Waters of Mara Park
28 Pub drinks, for short
29 Dinner accessory
32 Knock
33 Soldier's training
34 Mine
35 Defend the
36 Broadcaster's acceptance
40 Way out
41 Type of Prison Break
42 Come to light
44 Shakes
45 Grooving
46 Rustic pioneer
48 Copies of Mona
50 Of
51 Sunday supplement
52 Tattoo
53 Tattooed girl
54 Help the
55 Letter's mood
56 Alarm, go
57 Birthday
58 Prevention
61 Roomful
Jonathan

DOWN
1 Be Total sure
2 "Via walking" comic
3 Russia's ruler
4 Patchwork
5 Dignify
6 Renaissance man
7 Cherry of "The Red Man"
8 Adding the bells and whistles
9 Raven or Lewis
10 Three-time Wimbledon champion
11 Daydream
12 Concerning bees
13 Mimi Leoz
18 Ancient Welsh resident
21 Part of NFL
23 Bike guard
25 Doll rule
26 Bovine-minded
27 Overnight guests
28 Nightcap
30 Cagey ... sum
31 Judge
32 Hockey Jones
36 Kindnesses
37 Prefab waffle
39 Reacts a George
38 Lookout
40 Almost wings
41 Tenure
42 Wreckers
43 Home and hearth
46 Bed of nails person
47 Drugs one's nose
48 Part of M.I.T.
49 Leaves breathless
52 Lipstick purchase

Friday's Puzzle Solved

By Arlene & Linda Buchman
Chicago, IL

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're a kind soul who knows you're open and willing. You can count people on you to be there for them. You're a good friend and don't sacrifice too much for others. It's up to you to look for those you love, but if you don't take care of yourself, you'll be of no use to anyone. You can and could be one of the most powerful users of your life. Explore it wisely!

NUMBER OF THE DAY: One, John Hilliard Jones Elmer, actor; Paula Abdul, journalist

ARIES (March 21 to April 20): Not one and not others, talk to colleagues, shop for an assembly, take care of your and environments. Even though you're working behind the scenes, you have to take care of daily business.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Today your attention needs to be on money. Projects and earnings. Your insight and intuition are on point. Be more reflective. Not need your attention.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): The Moon is in your sign today, which makes you a bit more aware of your self-worth. Make social footwear. Make things a little bit of more grand look your way today!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Mind, be, love the system to be fantastic, so an excellent surroundings will please you. You need to know to make a financial decision seemingly.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Due to friends and members of an organization, you're in a good day to someone. Talk to others about your brand and your ideas for sure. Assume that handmade with fellows.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Today is a good day to avoid an issue. Bring that dream of fashion to your self-esteem.

Therefore, be aware of how you look and act. People today your Conversations with DNA, parents and investors are significant.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're in a relationship different today. You want to accomplish your goals. Your sense of adventure is aroused. Books also belongs to home-something.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Take care of everyone details regarding transitions, relocation, etc., and shift. Catch up on things you've been putting off or avoiding. You'll feel better if you handle these business.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Communication with your colleagues and friends are important today. Avoid any fights today when dealing with others.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Someone who you can to feel comfortable with is a good sort of time. Work today for better results in relationships.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Mix things up with others and be open to new ideas. Make sure you have some fun. You deserve it!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Focus on family members. Your home and your relationships are important. You might want to stay home today. Your day is perhaps a little bit of a loner one.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

4		3				1		
				5				
9		2				7		4
			6		9			
	4						6	
			1		2			
5		9				2		6
				7				
		8				9		5

Difficulty Level ★★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answers to yesterday puzzle

5	6	1	9	7	8	4	3	2
4	9	7	3	2	1	6	8	5
3	8	2	6	5	4	1	7	9
8	2	5	7	6	3	9	4	1
6	4	3	1	9	2	5	8	7
7	1	9	5	4	2	3	6	8
1	7	6	4	2	5	8	1	3
9	3	4	8	1	6	2	5	7
2	5	8	2	3	9	7	2	6

Difficulty Level ★★★★

Tours, Leisure & Chow

Where to Stop Where to GO

A weekly directory of the country's best establishments

Authentic Japanese dishes concocted with love and passion

YUMIE KISHIMA, THE MAN behind the well-loved Japanese restaurant, Tenkiji, has two passions – golf and Japanese food.

Twenty years ago, Kiyoyasu journeyed to the Philippines to pursue his love for golf. While he was in the country, toeing off in different golf clubs in the locale, he discovered that there weren't good restaurants offering authentic Japanese cuisine at that time. With this, he moved on to a more challenging course and evolved from a golfer to a restaurateur. Together with his wife, Mieny Kiyoyasu, and some Filipino partners, he opened Tenkiji Japanese Restaurant in Milky Way building, Ibeza Road, Makati, giving Filipinos a taste of authentic Japanese cooking. Tenkiji became a huge success and enjoyed loyal patronage from diners with discriminating tastes, an elite set which included dignitaries, celebrities and other famous personalities.

Now, the restaurateur takes on a new course, emerging at Century Tenkiji, the homey Japanese restaurant of Century Park Hotel in Malate, Manila. Kiyoyasu explains: "We found a new home and new patrons to back up Century Tenkiji. As such, we will be able to serve more of the delicious food items cooked in traditional Japanese way which our customers love. We will also introduce exciting additions to the menu to give you a broader selection and a deeper appreciation of Japanese cuisine."

According to Mr. and Mrs. Kiyoyasu, the menu of Century Tenkiji echoes the four seasons of Japan – winter, spring, summer and autumn, as each period is marked with a distinct assortment of culinary delights. The daily catch of fishes is the example varies during winter and summer, to the same way that different vegetables are harvested during spring and autumn. Century Tenkiji guarantees diners a gastronomic adventure that will delight the palate and evoke pleasure.

Only the finest and freshest ingredients are used in preparing every item in Century Tenkiji's extensive menu of delicacies specially flown Tenkiji, one of the largest wholesale markets in Tokyo, where one can find the freshest produce – from vegetables and fruits to meats, fishes and other marine products. Daily deliveries are made through Century Park Hotel's affiliations with Philippine Airlines, so both enterprises are run by Japanese owner, Lorie Tan. Moreover, a formidable trio stands behind Century Tenkiji – led by Yusuke Kobayashi as executive chef, Tenkiji Seiji Kamijo as supperanda chef, Shinji Furukawa as hot kitchen and tempura chef, and Yamauchi Ichiro as the sushi chef.

Classic, all-season Century Tenkiji offerings that diners must try are the Gindara Teriyaki, tenderloin and flaky gindara fish topped with a rich sweet and tangy teriyaki sauce; Kaisen Salad, a concoction of crispy greens and cooked fillets of tuna; Kaisaki, a delectable fire-grilled scallops in butter and sake sauce; Yakiyaki, a sumptuous soup with choice beef in hand name which is a place in Japan; and assorted Japanese vegetables; Yakiyaki Tenshi, a tasty Chuni Beef with a savory teriyaki sauce; Ju Chi sushi, a colorful main course with tasteful tastings, fresh vegetables, and sushi rice as main ingredients; an indulging Shokudo Bento, a complete lunch from appetizer to dessert which includes sashimi, tempura, and a filling dish made soup; and not to be ignored are the fresh selection of sushi and sashimi such as Shime Saba, Tai Sashimi, Katsuobi Sashimi, Amebi Sushi Ebi, and Ikan Tataki Sushi.

Century Tenkiji prepares and cooks every dish with skill, art and grace, making for an experience that is genuinely and distinctly Japanese. Everything that is served in Century Tenkiji is executed with love and passion for great food. Kiyoyasu invites everyone to visit Century Tenkiji for a taste of truly authentic Japanese cooking.

For inquiries and reservations, please call 526-0455.

The Century Park Hotel is owned and managed by Manuel Chuidian and Rezort Corporation.

Renaissance offers weekend 'Spa Escape'

THE RENAISSANCE MAKATI City Hotel, Manila offers a relaxing and rejuvenating weekend room package designed for those wanting to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life. "Spa Escape" offers luxurious accommodations at a deluxe room inclusive of a sumptuous buffet breakfast for two, and a complete head-to-toe spa treatment for two. The two-hour spa treatment consists of a deep cleansing Ayumedics 3M facial which purifies and nourishes, harnessing the therapeutic benefits of aromatherapy to hair-care and restore skin, and an aromatherapy full body massage with a choice of Ayumedics or Swedish styles. The spa treatment is expertly done by spa specialists at the hotel's Mandara Spa or in the comfort of the guestrooms. The Spa Escape Package is offered at P7,000++ per night from Friday to Sunday.

For more information and reservations, call the Renaissance Makati City Hotel, Manila at 811-6888.

One autumn lunch at G Hotel Manila by Waterfront

G HOTEL MANILA BY WATERfront recently hosted an autumn-inspired luncheon party for the Ambassador Corps in Canada to introduce the first boutique hotel concept in the Philippines. With real autumn trees, overlooking the blue waters of the Manila Bay in eco-friendly resort, the guests all enjoyed the fall season reminiscent of the Philippine Opera Company while being serenaded with an autumn aurora carefully designed by chef Riel Teodoro.

"Our goal was to create a luncheon that encouraged conversation and networking opportunities while wooing the crowd with a feeling of excitement," said Yui Mangawang, hotel manager of G Hotel Manila by Waterfront. "We created the autumn lunch party as a part of the signature events for G Hotel Manila, because the hotel's Promenade Mall motif was designed to simulate different moods for different occasions highlighted by real interior elements set up overlooking the waters as well as the dramatic setting of the skyline. It is simple an ideal setting for any dramatic personalized parties."

G Hotel Manila by Waterfront opened in November 2006. With a unique and unconventional black and white lobby, it was designed to introduce a new hotel concept in the country. The result is overwhelming, having gathered a remarkable acceptance and repeat client bookings by G.

Staged at the hotel's Promenade at the ground floor ballroom, the lunch started as the doors of the ballroom swung open, revealing two rich maple trees leading to a couple of more autumn maple trees that have slowly lost the richness of leaves. As guests moved into the ballroom, a cup of light embossed with autumn aurora signs, a staple of most major ones signifying variety of colors and textures. Glass containers each featuring autumn flowers with autumn fruits and nuts dramatically sit on each of the tables. Elegant gold silkary chairs with earth-tone satin seats surrounded the tables dressed in muted oranges, glowing and warm with the autumn theme of the lunch party.

"According to guests, the highlight of the lunch came were dessert and coffee, where the opera singers performed the highlights of selected the different emotions of autumn through their repertoire. The will be just one of the personalized thematic parties that you can expect from G," says Yui Mangawang.

For more information on more unique parties at G Hotel Manila by Waterfront you may contact 523-8888, 667-3888 or e-mail gsales@waterfronthotels.net, events@waterfronthotels.net.

G Hotel Manila is under the Cooperate Management Group of Waterfront Philippines Inc., the country's largest Filipino-owned and managed first-class hotel chain. It is the only hotel chain in the country that has presence in the key cities of the archipelago. In Manila, it operates the Manila Waterfront Hotel and Casino and G Hotel Manila by Waterfront, in Cebu it operates the Waterfront Cebu City Hotel and Casino and the Waterfront Airport Hotel and Casino Mactan, while in Davao it is represented by the Waterfront Insular Davao Hotel. Currently, the company operates close to 2200 rooms, employs 1500 employees, and has the biggest gaming facilities with over 43,000 square content of convention and gaming space.

More value at City Garden Hotel Makati

GOOD NEWS TO BUSINESS travelers, City Garden Hotel Makati offers one of the best hotel services in Makati at a reasonable price and no service charge. It's an ever-bright room rate starting at dollar 80 as low as P3,850+ per person on twin-sharing basis inclusive of free sumptuous buffet breakfast for two, free use of its open-air swimming pool at the Roof deck and its fully equipped Gym at the Penthouse. After a day of fun activities, try the Bamboo Bliss, a signature spa package at the newly opened Bamboo Massage & Spa at the Upper Atrium.

For those after holiday get-together and reunions, its Party Package rates for as low as P24,750+ inclusive of buffet menu or barbecue grill and discount on drinks for wedding and debut packages rate for as low as P59,000+ inclusive of a buffet menu for 100 persons, a cake, souvenirs, floral arrangements, and other amenities.

For clients, do not miss the Breakfast Bar & Grill. Offering sumptuous grilled specialties and open views, it has the best view of the metropolis at night.

For more details, City Garden Hotel Makati is located (strategically) restaurant strip at 7870 Makati Avenue corner Kalayaan Avenue, Makati City. For reservations or inquiries, call (02) 810-1111, or its domestic toll free number 1-800-10-CARDEN (1427336), or at www.cityguardenhotels.com.

Shape up at Dusit Hotel Nikko's DFIT

DUSIT HOTEL NIKKO'S FULLY-equipped fitness studio – DFIT, DFIT is Dusit Fitness & Beauty's branded fitness chain in the Asia-Pacific region. Now open at the second floor of Dusit Hotel Nikko, DFIT offers the concept of "inspired health, wellness and athletic style" in the comfort of a deluxe hotel. The DFIT's square meters fitness center has the best equipment designed for the function to meet the different fitness goals and varying needs of its members. It features a Life Fitness strength and cardio equipment, Jaclo entertainment system, group fitness classes, outdoor area classes, sauna and interactively qualified personnel running it. DFIT members with enjoy good privileges such as discounts in the hotel's specialty restaurants and unlimited use of the hotel's swimming pool amongst others. DFIT is now exclusively to hotel guests and members. For fitness appointments and membership inquiries, please call 814-0722 or 867-5000.

Kids' flick keeps spirit of book intact

By Mookie Torre

THE TRAILER FOR THE CHILDREN'S FILM "Bridge to Terabithia," is a bit misleading. It would have you believe that the movie is all about two children discovering a secret, enchanted world peopled by strange and sometimes extraordinary creatures by CGI.

If you watch the movie for its special effects, then you will be disappointed. There are barely any—though what little exists is impressive enough cases of the folks from Weta.

Themes

In truth, the film is more than just another big and essentially soulless special effects extravaganza. It's a delicately made movie, the likes of which we don't often get to see in this day and age of epic and gimmickry. Its themes are simple but they're profoundly moving in their simplicity.

Based on the classic Newbery Medal-winning novel by Katherine Paterson and with a script written by her son, David Paterson, this children's tale tells the story of fifth-grader Jess Aarons (Josh Hutcherson), a loner and an artistic boy who is

ROSIE and Hutcherson give full play to their sense of wonder in "Bridge to Terabithia."

bullied at school. He also doesn't get any love at home from his overprotective and different father.

Themes of friendship, the power of the imagination, and eventually, loss, which are one other rendered so forcibly in other movies for the same age range are predominant throughout the film.

Jess forges an unlikely friendship with Leslie Burke (Anna Sophia Robb), who is the new eccentric rich girl in town (whose parents also don't own cars—a TV set). The pair escape the real world by forging a book using an "enchanted" topic, and start up as a forest... Terabithia, a magical world peopled by fairy mythological creatures.

The film showcases pitch-perfect performances from its two leads, and also from the actors who play Jess' younger sister, May Belle (who got several laugh lines in the audience).

Original material

This movie has stayed true to its original material, and has kept the spirit that made the book so special intact. The special effects are there only to enhance its tale. The story itself is as powerful that few embellishments are necessary.

Filmmakers should make more productions like this. It reaches out and touches its viewers' hearts. It stays with you long after the movie is over.

National Artist and Drama King reunite in 'Faces'

AFTER A LONG PERIOD, you may now add to the very short list of artist-partnership between the country's Drama King, Christopher De Leon, and National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts, Eddie Romero: "Dance of Love." Though light-weight compared to their previous projects, it's a delightful and unpolished romantic drama-comedy.

Romero first handled a youthful theme in what is now considered one of Philippine cinema's best movies, "Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Baya Ngayon?," which came to fruition during the so-called "Golden Age of Philippine Movies."

Commentary

This was followed by "Ito Ba ang Sinasabi," a fantasy film and a commentary on contemporary Philippine society. Then came the epic, "Aguila." De Leon was praised by no less than Bienvenido Lumbera for his portrayal of Gat Bonifacio in "Tatlong Patak ng Dugo."

The De Leon-Romero partnership has come a long way as far as their professional pursuits is concerned. When they were brought together for Romero's latest opus, the adrenaline rush was high. In addition, the storyline of "Dance of Love" prompted me like a lioness.

Swan song

Much as romance would seem more in the dance artistic sphere, the movie's theme could be detected in "Life and Cloud" years ago as a tadalok. Christopher is romancing two politicos, while Atang Dela is getting ready for the follow-up to his first digital box office.

Romero's home cinematic experiments has earned him a "grade higher than A" from the Cinema Evaluation Board. Watch this endeavor come to life as theaters currently showing "Dance of Love."

DE LEON. First worked with Romero in "Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kaya Ngayon?"

How to avoid conflict

A WIFE ONCE SAID, "I KNOW I'M smarter than my husband!" But, her being smart didn't guarantee the success of their relationship. She is, they had many conflicts and arguments throughout their married life. The commonplace (but serious) three broke down because of pride and ego issues.

The world is full of conflicts and wars. The most common of these conflicts that occur in the household between husband and wife. Here are 10 rights to learn dissension and resolution:

Limitations

1. We are not omniscient. We can't accurately read minds and hearts. It's not wise to judge others. Knowing our limitations allows us to accept the presence of others as each other. We don't jump to hasty conclusions. We listen before we speak.

2. He who exalts himself shall be humbled. Humility is the best policy. We are fallible souls who possibly caught in a web of harmful

R. Valenciano and S. Bienvenu

suffering. A humble person acknowledges his limitations and weaknesses. They feel able to seek solutions to problems. A boastful person does not seek a cure.

3. Harsh words can liken personal scenes. Subsequently, they cause pain and heartache.

4. Grudge seeds don't sort much, but they're worth a lot. So, be generous with seeds that bring healing.

Journey

5. Seek wisdom and learn the highest truths. It doesn't matter how much knowledge you have. If you are spiritually blind, you'll stumble and fall in your journey through life. Wisdom enlightens people and brings peace.

6. We are the center of the universe. Consider what's pleasing to the Supreme Person and work for the welfare for His children. Compassion and serving spirit others, and then offer your devotion to the great One. That is how you find real happiness!

Show biz and politics...

From page E1

veteran politician spoke in their hearts where he announced that he was running for president.

They broached a huge slab of inked only when "Roger" changed his mind and accepted an ambassadorship instead.

But, other stars got the idea, and later opted to go for the senate—albeit many dearly. At one point Joseph Estrada first ran for mayor of San Juan, made his reputation as an outstanding local official, now went from senator to VP, then all the way to president—until controversy felled him.

Presidency

The next big shot to aspire for the presidency, Fernando Poe Jr., won the hearts of voters, but lost the official polls. Aside from those top guns, scores of lesser lights ran for a host of other posts, with quite a number of them ending up in the MTV circle.

Through the years, however, the prospective big groups that move them for candidacies are winding up in the losers' loop—a possible sign that voters are starting to wise up and are learning to separate the possible contenders from the merely popular.

That may not be everything, but at least, it cautions stars and starlets to work harder at their political careers. Which is why some show series are going back to school, to study public administration and other related subjects.

For the year's elections, the usual suspects are running for public office, with some big

Eastwood reveals...

From page E1

more subverse and focused than "Flags." It reads like a sepia look that gives the production historical nature and accuracy. But, the color—particularly the use of reddish hues of orange and crimson—suddenly come alive when violence erupts. "Letters" nominations ironically provides a striking contrast to the unspeakable horrors of war, and bestow adds to its dramatic impact.

Insatiable quest

Watanabe puts a tender, human face on the hateful Imabi, that his long haunted victims—Filipinos, included—of Japanese atrocities in the Pacific War. Watanabe, who directs the most powerful performances in the movie, shows that they are as much pawns as everybody else was in man's confoundingly insatiable quest for power and world domination.

He hides from the mother of a captive American soldier says it all. His works Dhilon Interven-

adjustments in the works, like Sen. Lito Lapid now opting to make his bid for Makati City instead. Is the shift a sign he's realized that he isn't equipped to be a legislator and is better suited for local administration?

Not that other stars are shying away from national posts: Some weeks ago, many were seen losing second to join the fadists, not because many were passionately secular legislators, but only Cesar Montano and Richard Gomez have survived.

And there are many people who want FPJ's widow, the similarly stellar Susan Roces, to run for a high post, purely to keep the flame of her late husband's name burning, but she has severely and wisely demurred.

Clout

Then, there are the specter of cute, Niko Ningdhan and Hadjh Kiram, both running for reelection as governors and banking on their past objectives and credentials, but also helped by their stars' celebrity status and crowd-gathering clout.

The other side of the star-politics coin is even more humorous: Politicians who try to become celebrities themselves, in the hope that their increased popularity will boost their work with voters.

It helps if they have stellar good looks, or a reasonable approximation thereof...Jose, if they don't, maybe they should tap into another Joseph: Cosmetic surgery to their paunches, and become consultants!

Golden statuette

On those nights, we're tossing for Bienvenido Lumbera's gift for long-overdue golden statuette for "The Impostor," but Manuel's excellent work in "Letters from Iwo Jima" (as well as Alejandro Gonzalez Iñarritu for "Babel") clearly passes a threat.

So, here's a clever addition to your favorite director: "Iwo Clint, Kindly in this one out and make Marilú's day, will you? You already have four of those trophies, anyway. Besides, Marty can't be America's premier living director if he doesn't have a single Oscar to show for it, can he?"